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130

Issue 130 | October 2016

Re-imagine the fall of Icarus

Discover how you can create striking images by taking a fresh approach with familiar legends



plus

- Captivating concept art
- **Dramatic game and film concepts**
- Mixing nature and geometry
- **Dynamic ink sketches**
- Speed paint a medic mech
- **and much more!**

Editor's Letter



ANNIE MOSS

Junior Editor

2dartist is now on Instagram!

Welcome to 2dartist issue 130!

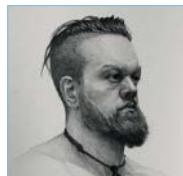
This month's issue features the work of two incredible senior concept artists, Richard Anderson and Brad Wright who discuss their careers in the game and film industries and share their tips for success. We also speak to illustrator David Rice about his work drawing links between nature and geometry, and comic book artist Koveck showcases his dynamic character sketches.

Also in this issue you can learn from Thibault Girard how to speed paint a sci-fi scene featuring a medic mech and see how Lorenzo Lanfranconi creates an animation style environment. Juan Novelletto is back with a tutorial re-imagining the fall of Icarus, discover how to design a character imbued with mystery with Emi Chen and Cathleen McAllister kicks off our new series on digital plein air painting!

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Brad Wright is a concept artist with twelve years experience working within the game and film industry. He is currently working at Creative Assembly, UK on *Halo Wars 2*.



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Richard Anderson is Senior Concept Artist at Rocksteady studios. He has previously worked on high profile projects such as *Prometheus*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Batman: Arkham Knight*.



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David Rice moved from Colorado to Portland, Oregon in 2012 to work as a commercial illustrator. He became a studio assistant to Blaine Fontana in 2013 then turned full-time independent artist in 2014.



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Koveck has worked as a comic book artist and freelance illustrator since he graduated in Fine Arts. Currently he works in the videogame industry as a senior concept artist at Ubisoft Barcelona.



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Thibault Girard is a concept and environment artist at FuturLab. He lives in UK, is a French native, and is passionate about Japanese culture, sci-fi art and books.



EMI CHEN

Emi Chen is a freelance illustrator based in Providence, USA. She currently works for Blizzard Entertainment and specializes in creating fantasy illustrations with dynamic lighting and intense color.



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Juan Novelletto is a concept artist and illustrator from Buenos Aires, Argentina. He works at NGD Studios, developing the Master of Orion reboot and is also Art Director at indie game studio Nastycloud.



LORENZO LANFRANCONI

Lorenzo Lanfranconi is a 2D artist from Italy. He is currently working on some editorial projects including *ALPHA beta test*, a personal art book based on an environmental journey.



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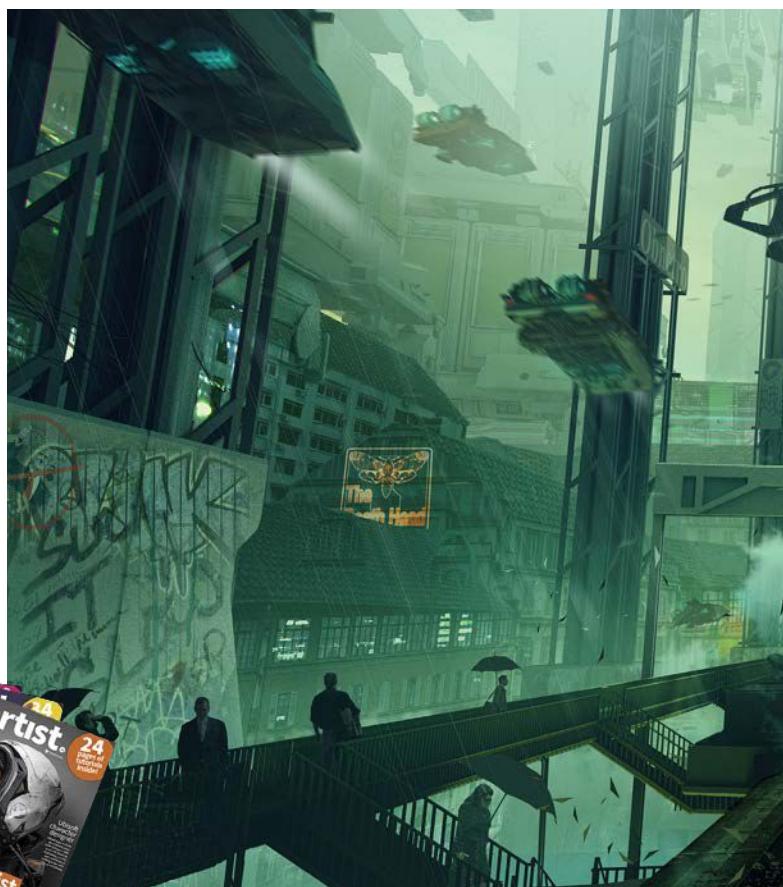
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The Artist

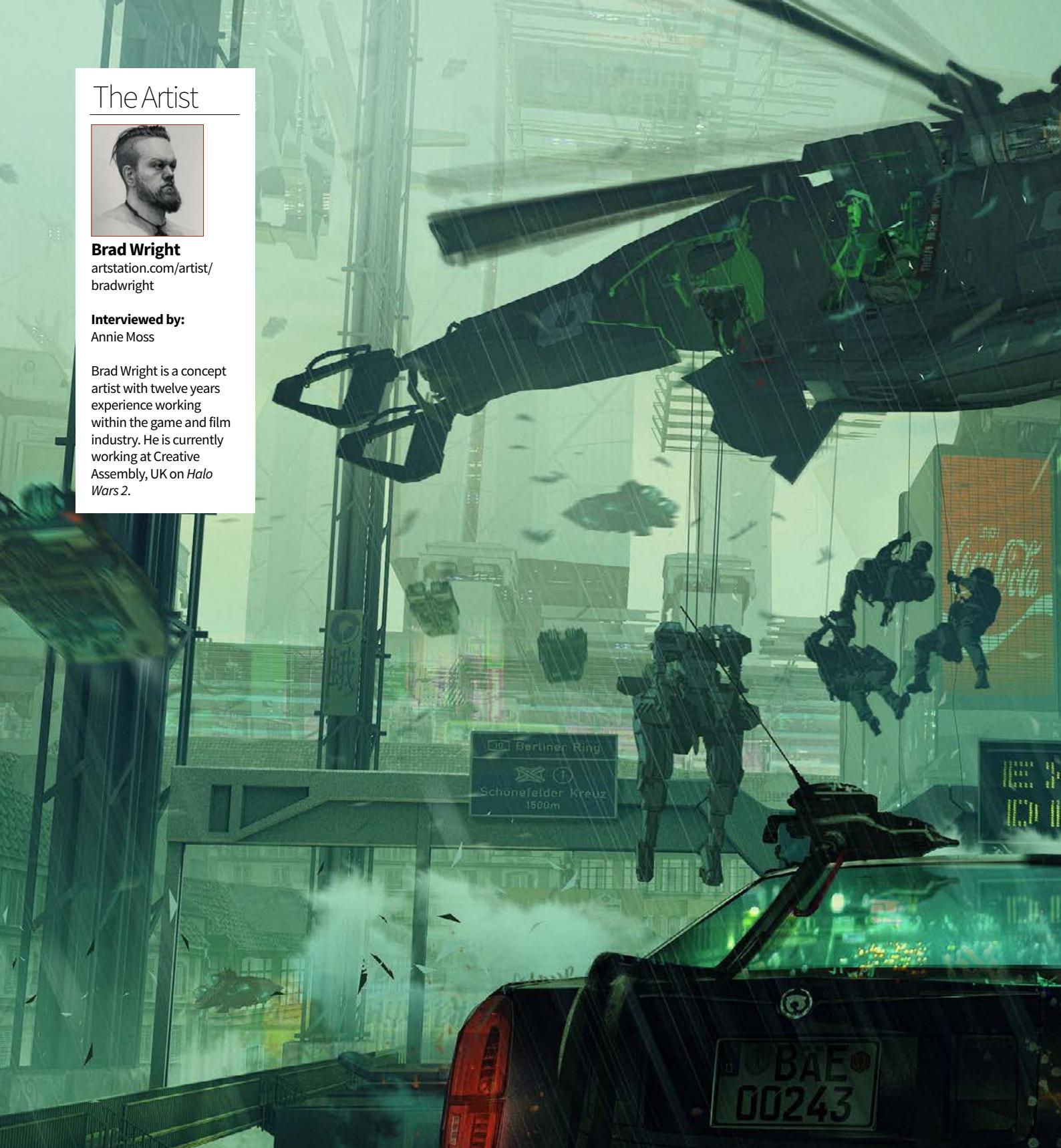


Brad Wright

artstation.com/artist/bradwright

Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Brad Wright is a concept artist with twelve years experience working within the game and film industry. He is currently working at Creative Assembly, UK on *Halo Wars 2*.



Captivating concept art

Senior concept artist Brad Wright discusses his symbiotic process and shares his advice for maintaining creativity ►



Brad Wright is an experienced concept artist in the film and games industries whose work you may have seen on renowned projects such as *Halo Wars 2*, *Alien: Isolation* and *Syndicate*. However, Brad's path into concept art was not an entirely smooth one. Lacking direction, Brad originally considered a career in computer science, before starting on a path towards graphic design. He then switched to studying advertising before eventually finding an area that really grasped his imagination; concept art.

It is the storytelling aspect of concept art which excites Brad the most, allowing him to pioneer new worlds and explore fresh ideas. In fact Brad actively seeks out inspiration from works that are the direct opposite of his own style to help him generate new narrative ideas. This month we speak to Brad about the projects that have had the biggest impact on his work, how he maintains his creativity and he tells us how he has been strengthened as an artist...

2dartist: Hi Brad, thank you for talking to *2dartist!* Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself and your work?

Brad Wright: Well, I have been working in studios for twelve years now. I'm currently in the south of England working for Creative Assembly on the *Halo Wars* franchise, having joined the team originally to work on *Alien: Isolation*. Both have been IPs which I hold dear, and inspire my work greatly.

Although I was born in South Africa, I grew up in Northern Ireland. A lot of that upbringing in troubled Ireland has stuck with me and is always somewhere in the work I do. Storytelling is what really excites me, whether that is in concept design, comics, or illustration. Concept art appeals the most for my needs, as it allows me to explore world building more effectively. Outside of my concept duties and personal endeavors, I enjoy more traditional art. Portrait and figure drawing are passions of mine.

2da: How would you describe your job to a group of aliens, who have no idea what a concept artist is or does?

BW: A communicator, solving visual problems. When I explain my job to my father I might as well be explaining it to an alien. So for that I simply say, I draw things which make people go "oooh cool." Though, in my experience, many industry producers and directors struggle to understand ▶

● The ground level of the huge super towers around the city, where old Berlin fuses with the new techno-industrial architecture © OBSIDIAN REVERIE Bradley Wright





what a concept artist is or does. So aside from being a visual communicator and problem solver, a concept artist needs to be adaptable. Whether that is to the project or the direction they are given.

2da: You've worked on a wide variety of projects including *Halo Wars 2*, *Syndicate* and *Chronicles of Riddick*. Which project have you most enjoyed working on and why?

BW: As a fan of science fiction, I have been fortunate to predominantly work within that genre. Cyberpunk is my first love, so *Syndicate* hit that mark. The work was freeing and allowed to me to develop and strengthen as an artist. Both through the project itself, and also the team I worked in as there were strong artists to feed off and grow. So for these reasons I would consider it the most important project and most fun project to have had worked on.

Alien: Isolation though is the project I consider myself most fortunate to have worked on. It's a franchise that every concept artist owes some part of their journey to. We created something

beautiful and engaging, and for me, it led to greater things in my own work and ability. So to be able to contribute to that legacy was rewarding.

"I devoted a year to learning how to draw properly. My studying verged on obsessive"

2da: What made you want to pursue a career in the digital art industry?

BW: I set off, like many, with no clue what I wanted to do in life. I didn't pursue art in any way; no drawing, designing, or even analyzing and absorbing art. I took the logical steps and went towards a career path in computer science that offered financial rewards. However, I realized very quickly, I lack any kind of aptitude for such endeavors.

With no other options available to me I followed my brother's path and went into graphic design. Studying advertising at university led me to realize that I hated it, but I loved ►





● Keyframe art for *Obsidian Reverie*. The hero, Danny, saves the girl
© OBSIDIAN REVERIE Bradley Wright





● Before Brad works on detailed concept paintings, thumbnail upon thumbnail needs to be done to flesh out the design. Iteration equals a successful design © Bradley Wright

illustrating. So after university, I devoted a year to learning how to draw properly.

My studying verged on obsessive, and almost exactly a year from deciding on that path I landed my first industry job, taking me to Sweden. It was only then that I knew with complete absolution that this was my path in life, and I still maintain that obsessive devotion twelve years later.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with and why?

BW: My day-to-day tools are simply Photoshop and 3ds Max. I've seen the growing need to understand and use 3D software in concept design. Turnarounds are so quick, that throwing 3D files back and forth around the studio for quick iteration, is vital.

Of course the fundamentals are completely vital, and should never be overlooked. Being able to realize any task quickly on paper, will always serve you well. When we hire in the studio, the first thing we look for is fundamental drawing skills. Everything I do starts with a sketch. Even when I spend five hours in a 3D

program designing, everything is roughed out in 2D first. It has become a symbiotic process, switching back and forth throughout any given design process.

“With game engines becoming more impressive, it also means sometimes I need to push the realism in renders of my concept art”

2da: Are there any tools, techniques or software you would like to explore in the future, and why?

BW: I've been touching upon digital sculpting in ZBrush. Not in the hopes of creating precise sculpted pieces of work, but more to aid the sketch phase. It is useful to quickly block-out shapes, to take forward later in either 3ds Max or paint in Photoshop.

With game engines becoming more impressive, it also means sometimes I need to push the realism in renders of my concept art. Understanding photography has helped to light scenes more effectively and hopefully present a more believable design. Though all these digital techniques are wonderful, I still continue to push my traditional work. Design on paper is a skill that I need to continuously train and hone.

2da: Which artist or group of artists particularly inspires your work?

BW: These days I tend to spend less and less time viewing online art communities. The work is all incredible, but I fear it will lead me to being too inspired and add to the pool of inbred visual design. Latching on to fads and trends are needed for the shot-callers in the industry, but do me no favors in my personal development.

Instead, I search out films that are at a glance, very much the polar opposite of the work I tend to do. The films of Terrence Malick for example have inspired just about everything I do. Analyzing such films will only be an aid to maybe the most important aspect of concept design, the storytelling. Even props in a game need some element of storytelling.

As I mentioned earlier, cyberpunk is a love of mine, so the classic movies of the genre really inspire me; both the films themselves and the development behind the scenes. Understanding where the origin of these masterpieces came from can hopefully help me in creating something memorable myself. ▶

Brad's significant artwork

Although dated in age and technique, and very hard to look at, this image is important in my work because it opened many doors for me. It brought me into the gaze of editors for high-level magazines, and even film directors. It was a personal exploration in creating these dead space travelers that I enjoyed immensely, with no intentions of pleasing anyone else. Sadly this imagery has become clichéd and diluted since this time period, some seven or eight years ago. As much as I'd love to paint more of this, I'm tired of being asked if it is a reference to Doctor Who!



2da: If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

BW: I would ask Syd Mead for a little insight into his thought process regarding shape language. Obviously I lack his engineering background, so more than likely it would be lost on me. Having a better understanding of composition would come from asking the cinematographer Roger Deakins about his approach to composing and coloring a shot.

With every artist I have met, no matter their level or discipline, I have no desire or patience to hear how they created something. I want to know why they did what they did. Understanding someone's motivations to do something is key. We can all learn the right buttons to push or strokes to paint, but learning where the need to do so comes from is a valuable education.

2da: Where (and when) do you feel you are at your most creative?

BW: In bed about to drift off, of course. When I'm relaxed, that is when the ideas flood in but it is not the best time for it.

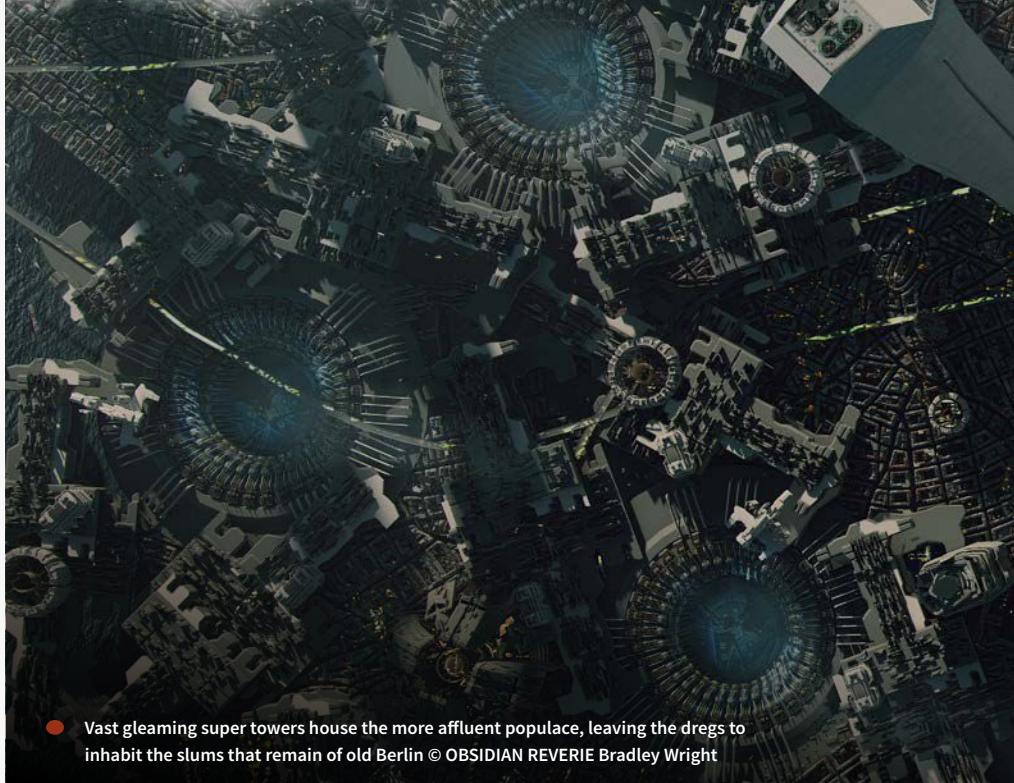
I think I've trained myself over the years to avoid many lulls in creativity. I keep my mind constantly evaluating possible solutions and explorations to pursue. I think that comes from a studio environment, and the need to always be on the ball and ready to tackle a task. Even in freelance work, you can't really afford to not be able to tap into your creativity. I'm not paid to sit around scratching my head.

Like everything, it is just something that needs to be trained and exercised regularly. If I disappear for a week on vacation, I feel that lull trying to creep in... so I don't do vacations.

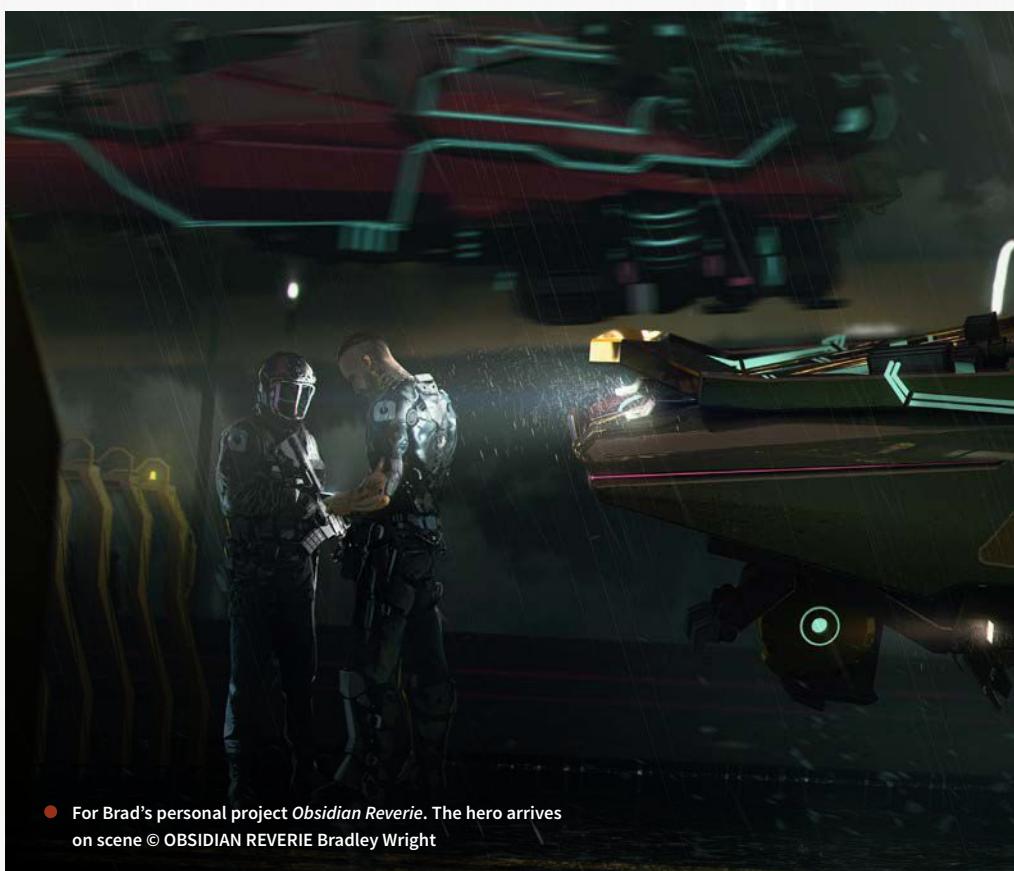
2da: Artist block is a problem for many creative people. Can you share a couple of tips you use when the inspiration stops flowing?

BW: I touched on this previously, and really I don't believe in artist or writers blocks. At my lowest levels of creativity I can still hold a pencil and make marks on paper. That's enough to start to build up towards something.

Maybe nothing will come of it, but it keeps the mind ticking over and in a constant mode of searching. If that fails, then films and books are always a



● Vast gleaming super towers house the more affluent populace, leaving the dregs to inhabit the slums that remain of old Berlin © OBSIDIAN REVERIE Bradley Wright



● For Brad's personal project *Obsidian Reverie*. The hero arrives on scene © OBSIDIAN REVERIE Bradley Wright

good source to kick-start something. I myself love a spot of poetry. The works of W.B. Yeats always flood my mind with imagery and inspiration.

2da: What initial steps do you take when you are first given a brief for a new project? Do you dive straight in or do you have a more analytical process?

BW: Usually for me, it's a dive-right-in-there approach. A good brief will always have a

good starting point to run with, and in a lot of circumstances, a good selection of reference. This happens especially with movie briefs, where the director needs to get as much out of you as possible and as quickly as possible. In my game concept work, I go right to the sketching with simple line art usually; just post-it style throwaway stuff. I would usually dip in and out of my own reference gathering as I do this, as ideas evolve and develop. I'm not the most analytical thinker,



so chaos is a lot less constricting for me. It just feels like a more fluid process for developing ideas.

2da: What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to launch their career as a concept artist?

BW: Be a UI artist. They're always in demand. But if concept is your path in life, then you need to put the work in. Avoid the online "clicks" and the constant need for social gratification, and

⚡ PRO TIP

Be original and creative

Take the time to develop your own ideas. As a concept artist it should be paramount that you demonstrate original thinking. Create your own worlds and populate it with design. Your portfolio will stand out to studios, show that you can design, and you have the staying power to stick to a consistently coherent stream of design.



● Exploring the possibilities of what a more anime, animated approach to *Obsidian Reverie* might look like © OBSIDIAN REVERIE Bradley Wright



● Classic sci-fi archetypes of hulking spaceships, have always appealed to Brad © Bradley Wright

instead train your craft. No one is going to give you the golden ticket or tell you the shortcuts to success. You will be a success if you grind at it.

It isn't glamorous and at times, it isn't fun. It's a job like any other, which requires hard work, commitment and sacrifice. It will reward you for this though by seeing your little seed of an idea sprout into wonderful experiences which will hopefully add to some sort of legacy.

Please draw too! The amount of young aspiring concept artist who can't draw is terrifyingly high. We hark back to the likes of Syd Mead, Ron Cobb, and Kow Yokoyama, to name a few, for a reason.

2da: When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

BW: I lift heavy weights and write prose. I tend to fill all my time with art though. I have found that my hobbies these days have become the observational stuff, like portrait and figure drawing. It's different enough from my work in that I'm

PRO TIP

Traditional practice

Don't ever stop drawing. Photo-real and 3D methods have become and will continue to be a required means to work in. But traditional knowledge and training will always be the solid foundation to build upon. Solid knowledge of composition, value, and observational skills will take your work to a level that elevates it.

not at a computer or designing much, that it separates itself and feels like a break from the job. But of course it is all training for the job.

Other than that, I enjoy making poor attempts at writing stories. As I mentioned earlier, storytelling is a driving force, so being able to write more than the image can tell, is very fulfilling for me.

2da: Finally, where will we be able to see your work next? Are there any projects we should look out for?

BW: *Halo Wars 2* will be out early next year, so hopefully I'll have lots of concept art to show for

that. It is very different to the work I do for myself. My personal project *Obsidian Reverie* is what I occupy most of my free time with, writing and illustrating. It will be realized more collectively in the future, in the form of a story-driven concept art book.

I'm also developing collectible products with a colleague, 1/6 scale action figures and statues, which we will be touring the conventions with next year. So look out for that, and hopefully get stuck into this world we are developing! ●

Thank you Brad for talking to 2dartist!







● An aerospace shuttle capable of atmospheric and space flight. For fast transit of goods or people © OBSIDIAN REVERIE Bradley Wright



Dramatic game and film concepts

With thirteen years' experience creating exciting concepts for the entertainment industry, and a Spectrum Gold award to his name, Richard Anderson shares his knowledge and top tips ►



The Artist



Richard Anderson
flaptrapsart.com

Interviewed by:
Debbie Cording

Richard Anderson is senior concept artist at Rocksteady Studios. He has previously worked on high profile projects such as *Prometheus*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Batman: Arkham Knight*.

When a friend of his brother presented ten-year-old Richard Anderson with two crates of comics, it initiated a life-long love of comic and fantasy art. At the age of nineteen Richard moved to Seattle to study animation before beginning his career as a 3D environment artist at ArenaNet, working on the *Guild Wars* franchise.

Back in 2008 (issue 031), *2dartist* spoke to Richard, by then a concept and illustrator for the entertainment industry, about his work on *Guild Wars 2*. Since then Richard's career has gone from strength to strength, seeing him busily working on major film and game projects such

as *Prometheus*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and the *Batman: Arkham Knight* game, a move to London, and winning a Gold Spectrum award. This month we catch up with Richard to hear about his recent work, how his peers have influenced his artwork, and how he overcomes creative block...

2dartist: Hi Richard, thanks for talking to *2dartist* again! Could you reintroduce yourself to the readers?

Richard Anderson: Hi! My name is Richard Anderson, also known as "flaptraps." I've been a concept artist and illustrator in the entertainment industry for about fourteen years now. My

career started on the *Guild Wars* franchise in 2003, and at the moment I'm working as a senior concept artist at Rocksteady Studios.

2da: When we last spoke to you in 2008, you were working on *Guild Wars 2*. What have you been up to in the last eight years?

RA: Well, I moved from concept artist to cinematic illustrator on *Guild Wars 2* in 2008, and worked at ArenaNet for a few more years. I got married in 2010; my wife is French, and we were thinking of moving to Europe at some point. Then in 2011 I was contacted out of the blue by MPC who ▶

● A personal piece





● A paint sketch for Richard's dailies

⌚ Artist Timeline Richard's career so far

2003: Started working at ArenaNet on the *Guild Wars* franchise as a 3D environment artist

2007: Became official concept artist at ArenaNet

2008: Work shown in *Into The Pixel* art show at E3 which gave Richard a lot of recognition

2008: Work featured on the cover of *2dartist* magazine

2008: Work published in *Spectrum*

2011: Richard won a Gold award in *Spectrum*

2011: Moved to London, UK to work at MPC on Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* film

2012: Started at Framestore working on Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy*

2013: Started as senior concept artist at Rocksteady Studios on *Batman: Arkham Knight*

2014: Awarded excellence award by the Art Directors Guild for work done on *Guardians of the Galaxy*

2016: Nominated for a Hugo award for the cover of *The Dinosaur Lords* by Victor Milán, created for Tor Books



Richard A Norden



● A personal piece for ArtOrder's *The Journal*, called *David and Goliath*

● Painting on to a photo



CITY BOY R



What do you think has been most influential to your career success?

I think being willing to try new things. Being able to adapt to new places and situations. For instance, moving from Montana to Seattle in 2000 was a very big move for me and really scary actually, but it turned out to be the best decision of my life.

Also, the move from Seattle to London was a major move again that was very scary, tough and exciting, but it opened up amazing opportunities I would have never had if I had stayed in one place.

were looking for a senior artist to relocate to London and work on a few projects for them.

From there I've been living in London for the last 5 years, moved around from MPC's art department to Framestore's art department working on pre-production of multiple film projects. In 2013, I was looking to get back to games and a great opportunity came up with Rocksteady Studios to help with *Batman: Arkham Knight*, where I have been since.

2da: How would you describe your job to a group of aliens, who have no idea what a concept artist is or does?

RA: It's the same when I explain my job to my grandparents, or my dad for that matter! My job is to solve visual problems, inspire, and visually develop ideas at the best possible quality for the team. That can mean using 2D skills along with 3D skills; whichever communicates the idea best.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with? Are there any tools you find yourself using again and again?

RA: I use Photoshop the most. I have tried other programs, such as Painter and so on, but Photoshop is the best for me to get the tools and

the results I need. On the 3D side of things I use 3ds Max for modeling. There are a few tools I'm trying to learn in the meantime such as 3D-Coat, ZBrush, and KeyShot to help with my concepts. I believe the future is really headed in that direction, but I'll always come back to Photoshop.

2da: Artist block is a bane for many creative people. Can you share a couple of tips you use when the inspiration stops flowing?

RA: I work a ton! I really enjoy what I do, and I like creating things, both inside and outside of my day job. However it weighs a lot on me creatively. So when I lose inspiration or feel blocked, or just feel like a bad artist, these are some tips: take a break and don't look at art for a while. Go to the gym or park and exercise to get the frustration out.

I like to cook, so I might try a new recipe, listen to an audiobook, or podcast. If I have the time, I'll take the day, and I've learned over the years that I'm most productive and creative in the morning.

Being a professional in a studio you need to stop, take a walk, look out the window, don't look at a screen. Re-think your process a bit, and also get some feedback from your peers – that might give you a kick-start, confidence or inspiration. ▶

⚡ PRO TIP

Photo paintover

In this paintover, I found a strong image of a city, and used it as a background and establishing shot for light direction. You can then find similar photos to crop in that have the same light direction and perspective to make a compelling image quickly, such as the foreground building on the left.

On top of that I used the same values in the background with the Eyedropper tool, and set my brush to Darken to draw the robot in the background, making it match the buildings in the distance. It's okay to use photos; just make sure you change them enough so the original is almost unrecognizable.



Richard ANDERSON



● David and Goliath themed illustration done
for an art book called *Art Order Journal*



● Another fun sketch using three words (cat, chic, gun) and playing with ideas for a comic

2da: Is there a particular artist or group of artists whose work you find particularly inspiring you?

RA: The main people that have inspired my work the most are my peers, who I went to school and worked with at ArenaNet: Levi Hopkins, Kekai Kotaki, Jason Stokes, Horia Dociu, Doug Williams, Jaime Jones, Matt Barret, Aaron Cobrly, Katy Hargrove, Tom Scholes, Ryan "the temp" Demita, and my art director Daniel Dociu helped a ton.

Famous artists I'm inspired by would be: Craig Mullins, Ashley Wood, Bill Watterson, Sean Gordon Murphy, Dermot Power, John Berkey, John Harris, and Bob Peak, just to name a few. The list could go on and on!

2da: Over your career you have worked on some pretty amazing

projects. How have you adapted and developed your skills over the course of these projects?

RA: Thank you, I really try to stay open to new ways of learning, but also always working on my fundamentals, drawing and so on. I find it fun to challenge myself and to try new things digitally with my 2D work. I learned a lot when moving over to film, from my co-workers, on certain techniques that I believe I would never learn anywhere else. It helped to get the results the client wanted. I would learn one thing and try to adapt it to other areas of my work.

2da: Are there any other areas in the digital art world that you would like to branch into and why?

RA: Sometimes I think I would enjoy animation, it's what I studied, but I'm really not sure. Right now I'm really happy with the position I'm in and the work I get to do. I get a lot of opportunities to do tight concept work to illustration. I just love drawing too much to want to move on to anything else.

2da: What is the first thing you do when you start a new project? Are you super organized and follow a set plan or do you allow the work to just flow?

RA: Each project is different; some places have a set protocol that they follow because they are starting new projects every couple of months, but other places have a free-flow way of working when it's a project that they know will take years, and the creative pre-production is a lot looser.

For myself when something new comes up, I first take some bullet-point notes on what is absolutely needed, then scroll through my reference folder, and then on to the web for further references.

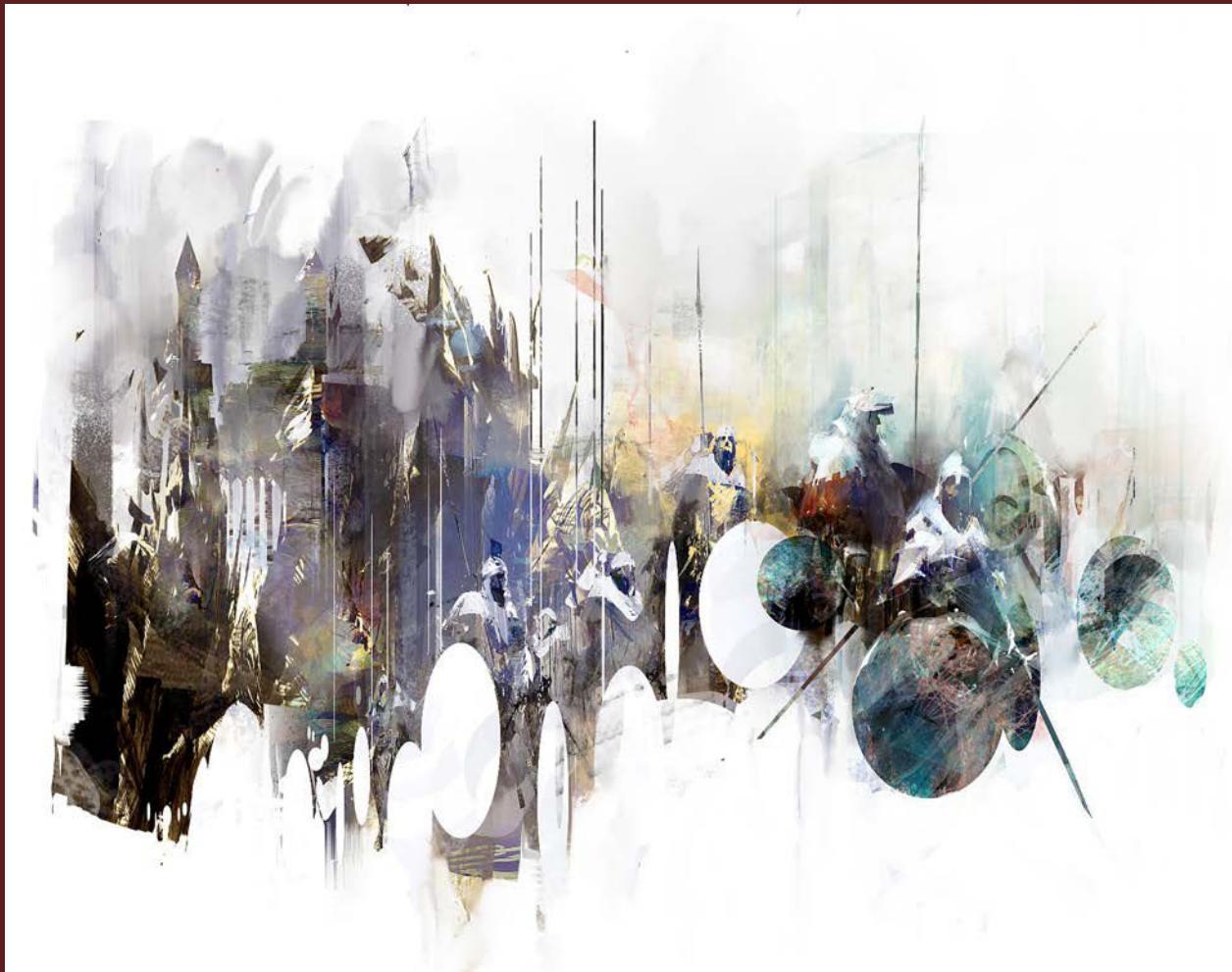
Next would be mood panels, which I would maybe just create for myself to stay on task and focused. After, I'd create loose sketches, then review, before moving on to a more finished product. ▶



Richard's significant artwork

This image is significant to me because I still look at it and enjoy what I accomplished in the illustration. I remember experimenting and trying new things with the layers and brushes, and I felt like I had made a leap and learned a lot.

A friend of mine and artist I greatly admired, Jaime Jones, told me that what I did with the circular-shield shapes, and negative-to-positive shapes was very smart. He said it was a great illustration, which really meant a lot. Now on top of that it is also the image, with which I won a Gold award in *Spectrum*, which I never thought could happen. Good memories.



2da: Several of the films you have worked on are based on comics. Do you think being a fan of comics makes these projects easier or more difficult, and why?

RA: It makes them easier! My brother's friend Aaron Steadman, bless him, gave me two crates of comics in 1991. I was ten years old and man, there was everything in there. It really kicked off my love of comics and fantasy art (such as some of John Buscema *Conan the Barbarian* works). I fell in love with the art of comics. When I first had the opportunity to work on *Thor: The Dark World*, and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, outside I was like: "Cool man, just doing my job," but secretly I was thinking "How did I get here, this is amazing!" So yes, it was a huge, huge highlight of my career.

2da: What can we expect from you in the next twelve months?

RA: I have a personal series that I'm working on at home which I'll be showing on my Instagram account (@flaptraps). I also have some new art coming out for an amazing book called *The Journal* by ArtOrder, including legendary illustrators like John Harris, Brom, Iain McCaig, and a whole list of others. I'm just honored to be in an art book with such amazing artists.

2da: When you're not creating wonderfully dynamic concept art, what do you like to do in your down time?

RA: I really enjoy cooking, so I'm trying to get better at it. I find it to be therapeutic almost; calming. Other than that I'm a big basketball fan, so I play a few times a week. The rest of my free time is spent with my wife and playing with our cat Foxy.

2da: And finally, if you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

RA: Good question! It would be Bill Watterson, the creator of *Calvin and Hobbes*. I have no idea what I would ask, I would actually just want to sit around and sketch with him; drawing cartoons! ●

Thank you Richard for talking to 2dartist!





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The Artist



David Rice
xplrstudios.com

David was born and raised in Colorado. He studied studio and digital art at the University of Colorado, and in 2012 moved to Portland, OR to work as a commercial illustrator. In 2013, he became a studio assistant to Blaine Fontana, and has been a full-time independent artist since 2014.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Mixing nature and geometry

Discover the work of artist and illustrator David Rice who uses acrylic paint to explore the cohesion between organic and man-made forms 

Featuring bold colors, patterns and animal imagery, David Rice's paintings and murals combine the natural world with geometric and man-made elements. By bringing these separate worlds together, David draws attention to the individual personalities of the creatures he observed growing up in rural Colorado, and suggests a cohesive existence between the two worlds.

David has been inspired by many contemporary artists but his work is mostly influenced by fellow Portland artist Blaine Fontana, whose work excited David into pursuing a career as an artist. In 2013, David began assisting Blaine in his studio, before becoming a full-time

independent artist in 2014. David and Blaine still collaborate on projects together and create large-scale murals combining their styles. This month, David talks to us about his career so far, and offers advice on how to develop your drawing techniques...

2dartist: Hello David! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

David Rice: I am an artist from Portland, Oregon, and I work primarily with acrylic paint. Most of my work has an element of the natural world in it combined with something man-made or geometric. I like bridging these two worlds that we normally see separately.

2da: What or who encouraged you to take up a career as an artist?

DR: My older brother was probably the reason I first had an interest in art. He was always drawing comic book characters, and I wanted to emulate everything he was doing when we were young. We wanted to create characters and worlds that we would see in these comic books. As I got older, my interests shifted from following comic book artists, to following contemporary artists.

One artist I have always admired and had the opportunity to work with is Blaine Fontana. I love his ability to bounce around between organic and graphic styles, and to use different mediums like painting and sculpture together



● *Wacom Mural, Commissioned mural at Wacom's Portland headquarters*

in one piece. Seeing his work was what really got me excited to further pursue a career in art.

2da: Your work is heavily influenced by nature but also often combines geometric shapes. Can you tell us a bit about the ideas behind this?

DR: Most of my work is drawn from experiences I had growing up as a kid in western Colorado. I grew up in the mountains surrounded by wildlife. It was always a fascinating experience to see a fox or big horn sheep in its natural habitat; to have deer walking through your yard and bears sleeping in trees outside the local shops.

I felt like these creatures were more than just props in a pretty setting. They had goals and fears. ▶



They had personality. I wanted to portray their individuality in my paintings. I wanted to bring their connection with humans to an even playing field rather than being thought of as separate. Paintings portraying wildlife and nature are nothing new. I wanted to bring these subjects outside of the traditional landscape scene and put my own take on them. I use a lot of faded wallpapers and layered backgrounds in my work. These represent the surrounding environment, once pristine, but now starting to fade.

2da: Where do you turn to for inspiration? Are there any artists you like to reference?

DR: My biggest inspiration comes from spending time outdoors. I love to go on big hikes with

my camera and take a bunch of pictures of landscapes. I imagine what happens in these environments when no one is around.

There are a ton of artists who inspire me these days, especially with social media like Instagram and Facebook introducing me to so much of the great talent that's out there. Some of the artists that I find inspiration from are Andrew Hem, Etam-Cru, Phil Hale, Seth Armstrong, and most importantly my friend, colleague, and mentor, Blaine Fontana.

I also find myself referencing a lot of early- to mid-twentieth century illustrators like Norman Rockwell, J.C. Leyendecker, Robert McGinnis, and so on.

2da: If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

DR: That's a really hard question! I think it would be fun to talk to Michelangelo about painting ceilings, or Banksy about street art and remaining anonymous for so long. But when it really comes down to it, I think I would ask Duchamp who R. Mutt is.

2da: In addition to your paintings, you also create incredible murals. How did you get into mural painting and how have you adapted your work for these large-scale pieces?

DR: I got into murals by helping out a few other artists with their walls first. It helped me see



how these large scale works come together, and how to change your perception of what details need to be added and what aren't necessary.

There are certain boundaries like scale and time that need to be addressed when first approaching a mural. In most of my experiences the mural needs to be painted in about a week, so the main objective is getting the composition blocked in as quickly as possible, before building up the details. Everyone has their own approach to large scale works. It gets a little bit easier with each new piece I get to do.

2da: What advice can you give to our readers who want to develop their drawing and painting techniques?

DR: Practice! As with anything you do, the more you do it the better you will get. Make a point to draw or paint something every day, even if it is just something small in a sketchbook. The greatest thing that helped me to grow my skills was becoming a studio assistant to a professional artist. I learned more in three months as a studio assistant than I did in four years of going to art college. There is nothing better than getting real-life experience.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with and why?

DR: I mostly use acrylic paint because it is what I am familiar with, and it is much more cost efficient than other types of paint. A lot

of my tools are pretty rudimental. I will keep old brushes that are worn down because they can create interesting textures like fur or wood grain. I don't find it necessary to get brand new equipment with each piece I do.

2da: Do you have a particular place you like to go to draw or paint? Do you create your works in a studio, at home or out in nature?

DR: I like to draw and sketch things from my home but I do all of my painting from a studio. I share a studio with two other extremely creative people. It is great to have an atmosphere where we are all working on separate projects at once and everyone can give feedback to each other. It takes a typically individual job and ▶





Totem, 30 x 30" acrylic on panel



Wild Sprites, 30 x 30" acrylic on panel



● *Guide*, 24 x 36" acrylic on canvas



● *Rattle*, 9 x 16" acrylic on panel



DAVID'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

This piece was something I had been thinking of painting for a while before I finally decided to bring it to life. I wanted something that was bold and slightly different from what I had painted in the past. I wanted the subject to not be conveyed as more human, but rather having what it perceives as its identity revealed. In this case, not how a human would view a chimp, but how the chimp would see himself.

The actual production of this painting had a lot of ups and downs. It was my first painting on canvas and while I was a bit nervous to work on a new texture, I actually really enjoyed the look and feel the canvas provided. As you could imagine, the space blanket was quite an undertaking. At first I felt very overwhelmed, but after I got in about a fifth of the blanket I could see the overall effect starting to take shape and I knew it was going to be worth the struggle. This piece has really helped me set the tone for the type of imagery and themes I want to continue exploring in my work.

● *Final Approach*, 42 x 56" acrylic on canvas





gives a sense of community to it. I don't think I would get as much done if I didn't have my studio mates to inspire me to keep working.

2da: What has been your favorite piece or project to work on so far?

DR: I did a large 4 x 8 foot painting called *Corrected Course* which was an interpretation of a Norman Rockwell piece entitled *From the Earth to the Moon*. Rockwell's painting portrays the crew involved in the Apollo 11 mission to the moon. His piece directly shows the hope and persistence that the human spirit is capable of. I wanted to show those same themes and ideals through the subjects I paint.

I replaced all of Rockwell's subjects with North American animals. My interpretation continues the sense of hope Rockwell achieved through a different lens. It takes an entire team of people working together to achieve something great like space travel. All members are necessary for the goals to be met. The subjects in my painting are necessary parts of a successful ecosystem. If one

member is gone, the rest suffer, but if all members play their part then the ecosystem thrives.

2da: How do you deal with a challenging project? Do you have any tips for our readers?

DR: Every once in a while I start a piece that I have been thinking about for a long time, hoping it is going to be my next big breakthrough. Then, halfway through, I realize it might not turn out how I had anticipated. At these points I find it important to take a step back and ask myself what's not working.

I will take a picture of the piece to view it from a different perspective and try to get a fresh look at what is going on. Sometimes it is the colors that need to change; sometimes it is the entire background or composition. Whatever the issue I always tell myself the same thing, "It is just paint, you can always paint over it."

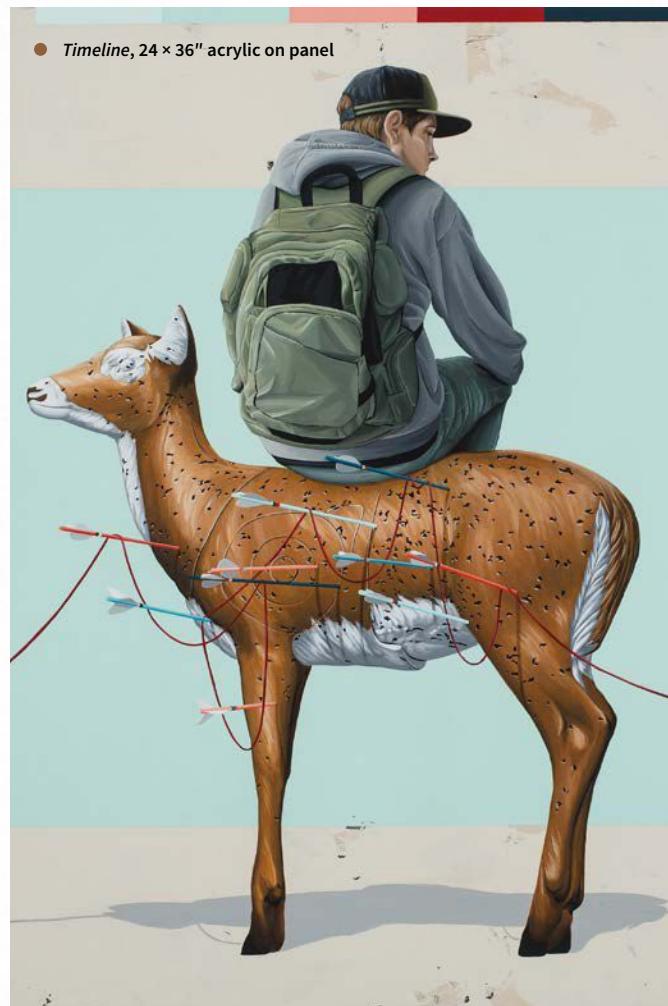
2da: Are there any other skills and techniques would you like to learn in the future? Are there any materials you would like to experiment with?

DR: I feel like I still have a lot to learn with the techniques and tools I am currently using, let alone other mediums. I would love to experiment more with sculpture and 3D mediums. I really admire artists that can turn their 2D works into 3D sculptures. There are so many more possible compositions when you are not confined to the flatness of 2D.

2da: What does a working day in the life of David look like?

DR: I usually get up at around 8 am, check my email and prepare for any paintings or projects I am working on that day. At least once a week I go to the lumber yard in the morning to grab wood for panels or frames. I get to the studio around 10 or 11 am and start painting. I typically paint till around 6 or 7 pm and then head home. My studio is not too far from my house so I am often on my bike. The rest of the evening is usually a combination of food, wine and Netflix.

2da: How do you like to spend your time when you aren't creating beautiful art? ▶



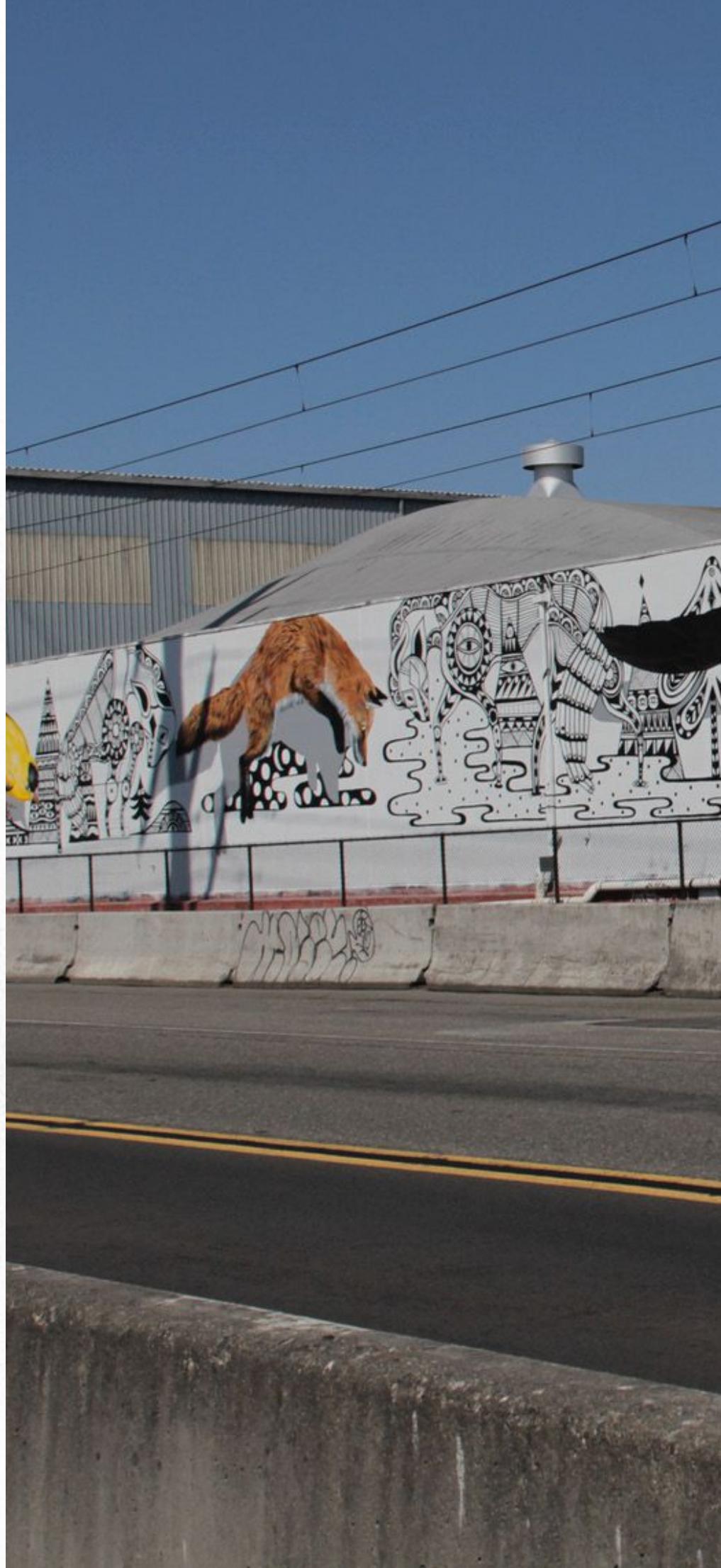
DR: I like to hang outdoors. I love being able to paint for a living but that keeps me trapped inside most days. It is nice to run around outside when I can. I love hiking, biking, skiing; all the usual outdoor pursuits. I really love to go on big hikes with my camera and shoot hundreds of pictures no one will ever see but me.

2da: And finally, what can we look forward to from you next?

DR: I have been asking myself this question a lot recently. I am growing as an artist and an individual so the themes I am interested in are starting to shift. I want to create more of a narrative in my works. I want there to be more of a story to interpret from the piece. I have started to make that shift by introducing more figurative subjects into my work, creating a tangent between the natural world I have already explored, and its connection with the humans that share it.

I want to pair the physical world we see with themes we cannot see, such as time. I don't think I will ever get bored of painting animals and I think there will always be an audience for it. I honestly would be fine painting birds for the rest of my career. But as I grow, so does my work, and I am excited to explore some of these new themes and directions. ●

Thank you David for taking the time to speak to 2dartist today!





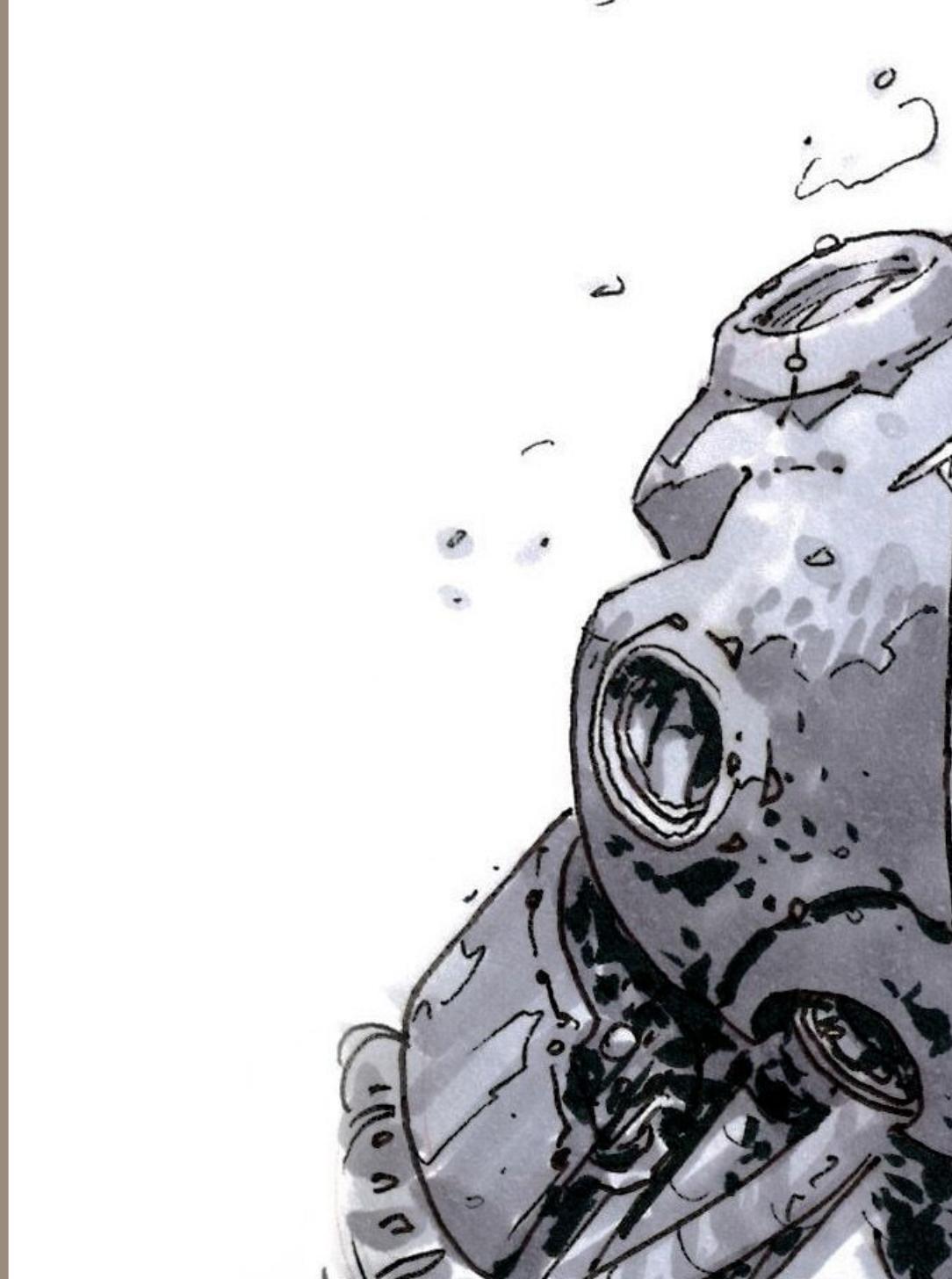
The Artist



Koveck

koveckart.com

Koveck has worked as a comic book artist and freelance illustrator since graduating in Fine Arts, and currently works in the videogame industry as a senior concept artist at Ubisoft.



Sketchbook of Koveck: Dynamic ink sketches

Digital illustrator Koveck discusses his inspirations and how sketching in ink helps him break free of the digital cage 

All images © Koveck



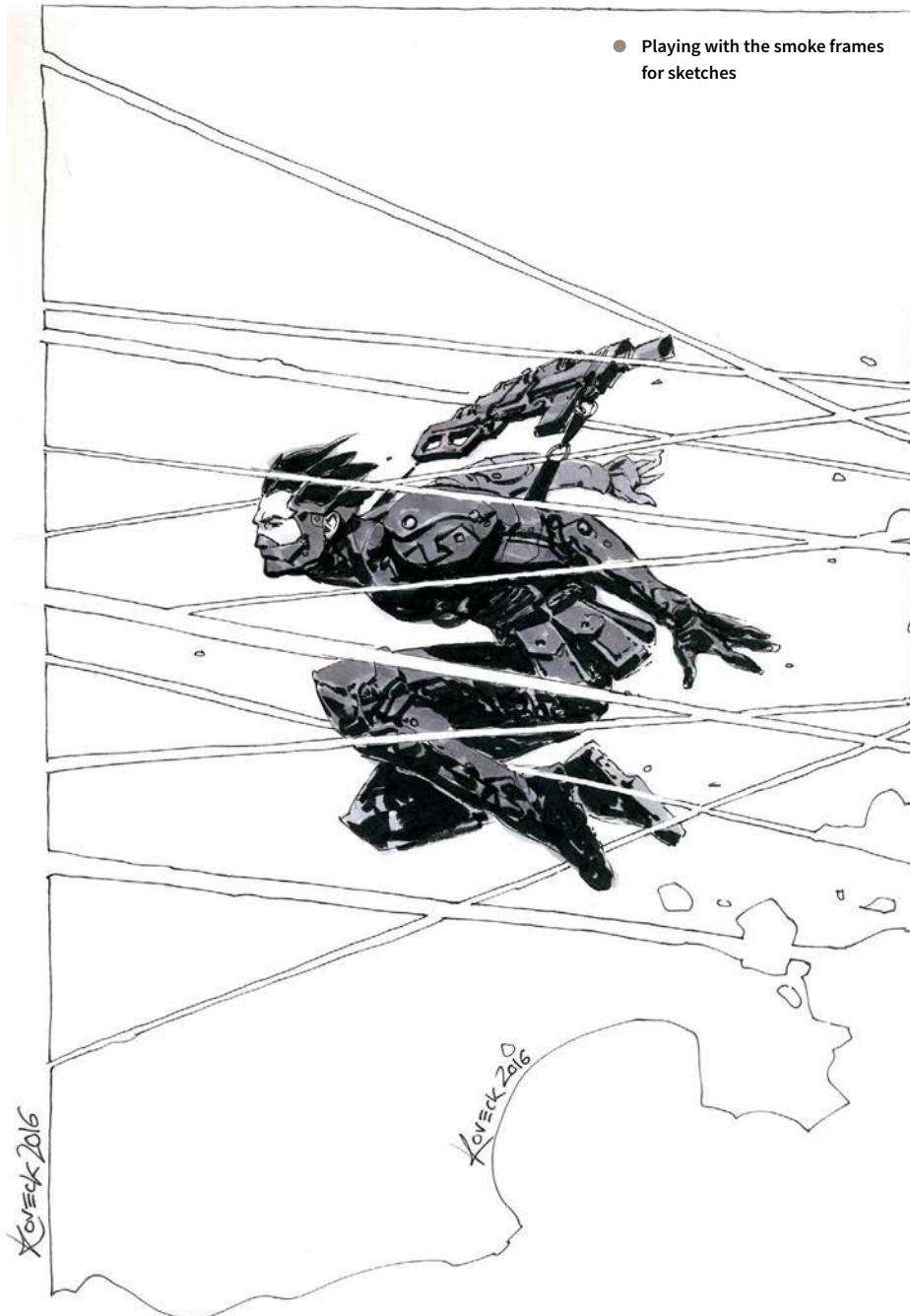
Koveck shares his top tips for improving your sketches...

I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. All my life I've been around art in one manner or another. When I was young my ultimate goal was to become a comic book artist, but when at last I published my first professional comic, I realized I didn't like the experience of working in comics. The reason is that I didn't like repeating the same characters a million times one page after another. Then I made the jump to illustration, which better suited me. Up until then I worked with

traditional media, but in 2006 I made the jump to digital art. Yes, I like it a lot, and yes, I can't imagine returning to acrylics, airbrush and oil paintings. However, traditional media is so special, so romantic... so "real." That's the reason I make these ink sketches: to escape the box of work and the cage of digital. ▶

"The best feeling I experienced as an artist was becoming the inspiration for somebody who wanted to join the artistic circle"

● Playing with the smoke frames for sketches



● *Theseus is coming, my lord combines a love of mythology and giants in one image*





Inspiration and ideas

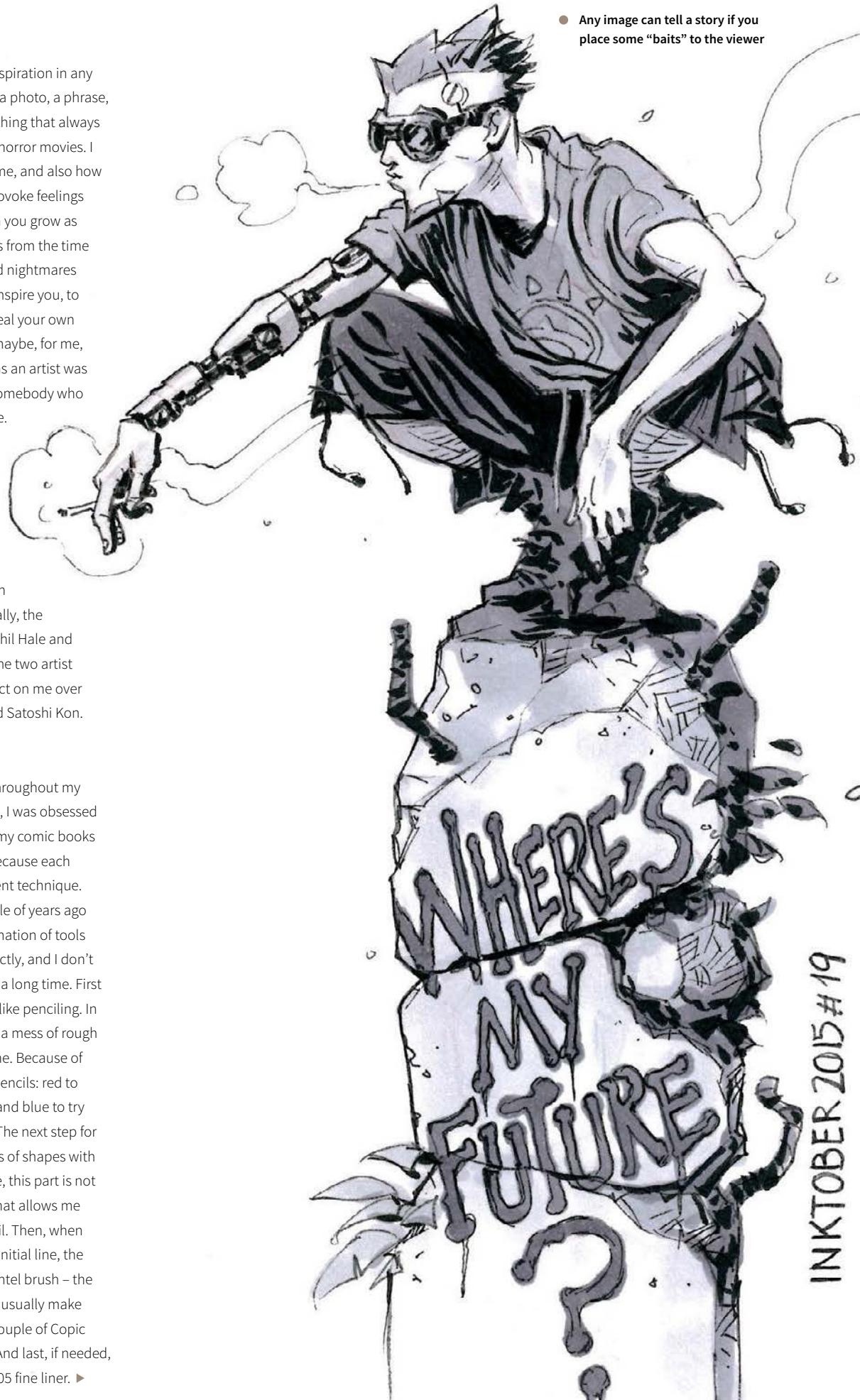
As I usually say, you can find inspiration in any place. Sometimes it's a movie, a photo, a phrase, a stain on the wall... For me, a thing that always works to spark my creativity is horror movies. I like the feelings they evoke in me, and also how they encourage me to try to provoke feelings of any kind in the viewer. When you grow as an artist, it is a pleasure to pass from the time when you copy the dreams and nightmares of other artists, the ones who inspire you, to the time when you can make real your own dreams and nightmares. And maybe, for me, the best feeling I experienced as an artist was becoming the inspiration for somebody who wanted to join the artistic circle.

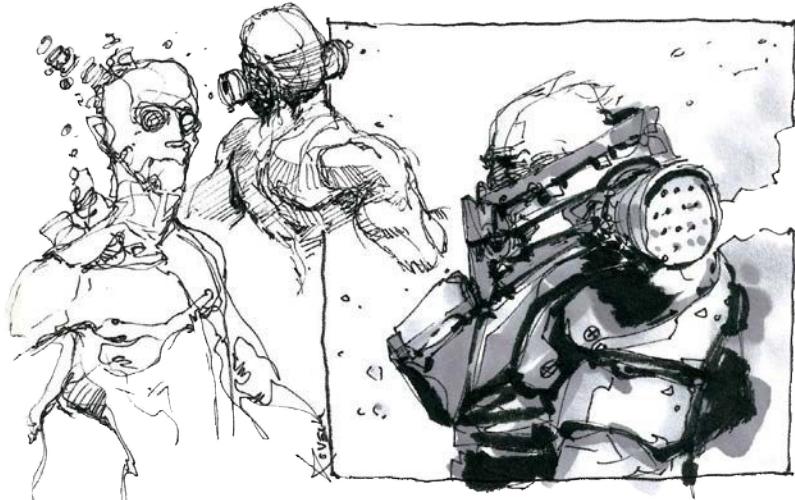
About my own inspirations, I can't name all the artists that have forged my style, and they are so different from one another: like Richard Corben, Katsuhiro Otomo, Juan Giménez, Dave McKean... Actually, the artists that I most admire are Phil Hale and Sergey Kolesov. As for inking, the two artist that have had the largest impact on me over the years are Brian Bolland and Satoshi Kon.

Materials

I have tried a lot of materials throughout my career. In fact, in the beginning, I was obsessed with trying everything. One of my comic books was a nightmare to produce because each panel was made using a different technique. Now, it is very different. A couple of years ago I discovered the perfect combination of tools that suits my inking work perfectly, and I don't have plans to change them for a long time. First of all, I need to say that I don't like penciling. In fact, I hate it. My pencil work is a mess of rough lines only understandable to me. Because of this, I draw the draft with two pencils: red to make the initial mess of lines, and blue to try to find order in the red chaos. The next step for me is just inking the silhouettes of shapes with a Mitsubishi Uni Pin 0.1. For me, this part is not yet the inking, it's only a step that allows me to erase the red and blue pencil. Then, when I have that aseptic and boring initial line, the real fun starts, inking with a Pentel brush – the tool I like the most. After that, I usually make two passes of shading with a couple of Copic markers: cool gray C3 and C5. And last, if needed, I add some fine detail with a 0.05 fine liner. ▶

- Any image can tell a story if you place some "baits" to the viewer





● Doodle images made in ink without any plan on mind. Koveck draws lines until he finds some interesting shapes

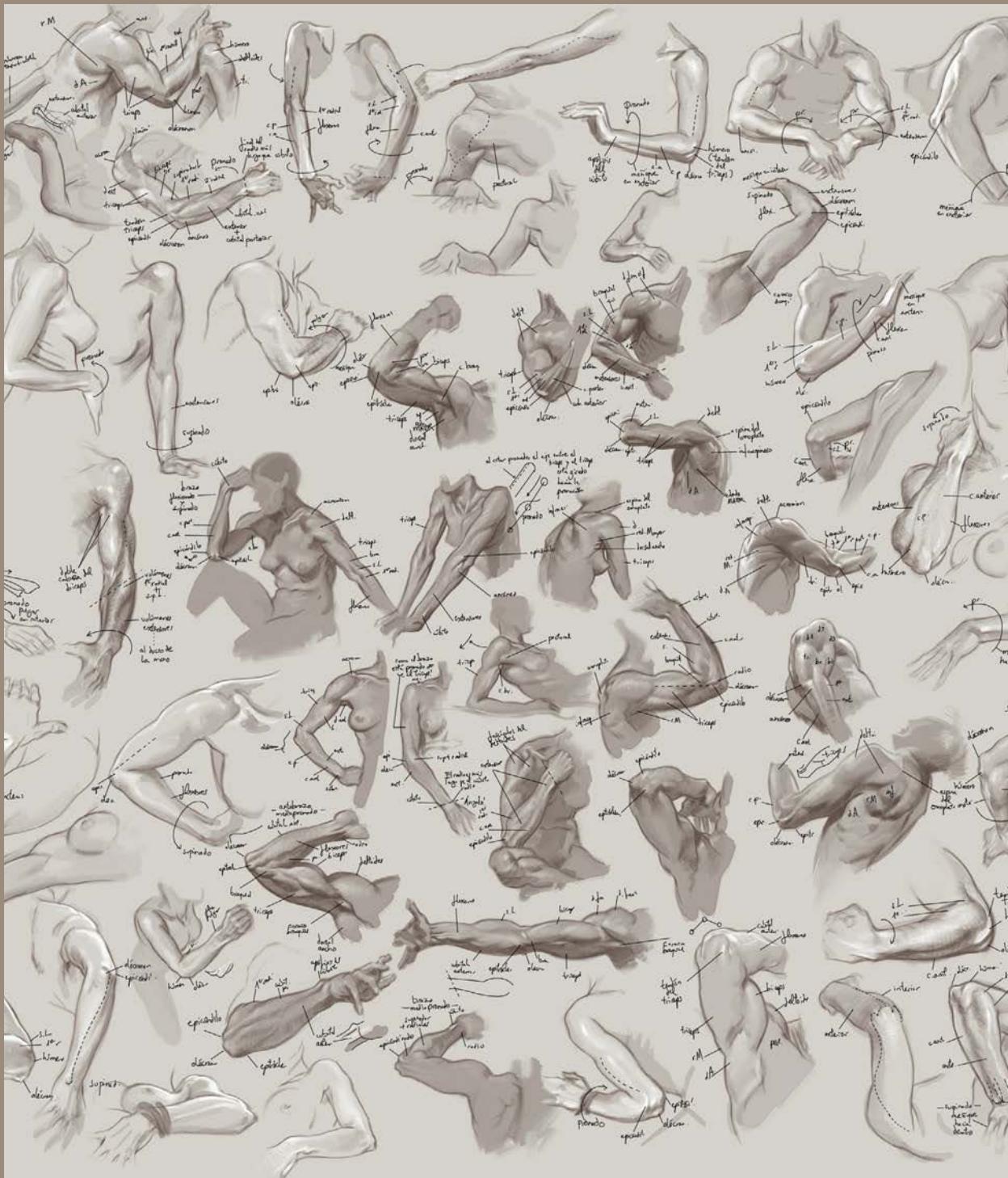


INKTOBER 2015 #23

● Astronauts are possibly the thing Koveck likes to draw the most, and this side view is quick and easy to produce

⚡ KOVECK'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

Arms anatomy 4



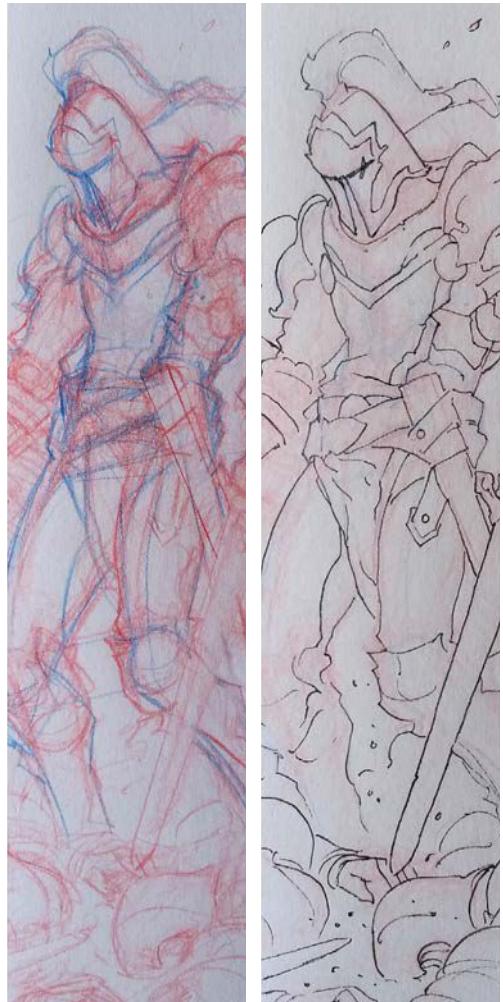
“My main tip to newcomers is not about technique, but instead about not getting obsessed with the end goal”

Sketching techniques

I have a sentence that I repeat to everyone that asks me for advice: “Becoming an artist is about progression, not perfection.” My main tip to newcomers is not about technique, but instead about not getting obsessed with the end goal. Enjoy the process of becoming an artist itself. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Sketches are a perfect way to train that.

Don't draw for other people, draw for yourself. Are you not doing it well? Don't worry if not, draw more tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. ►

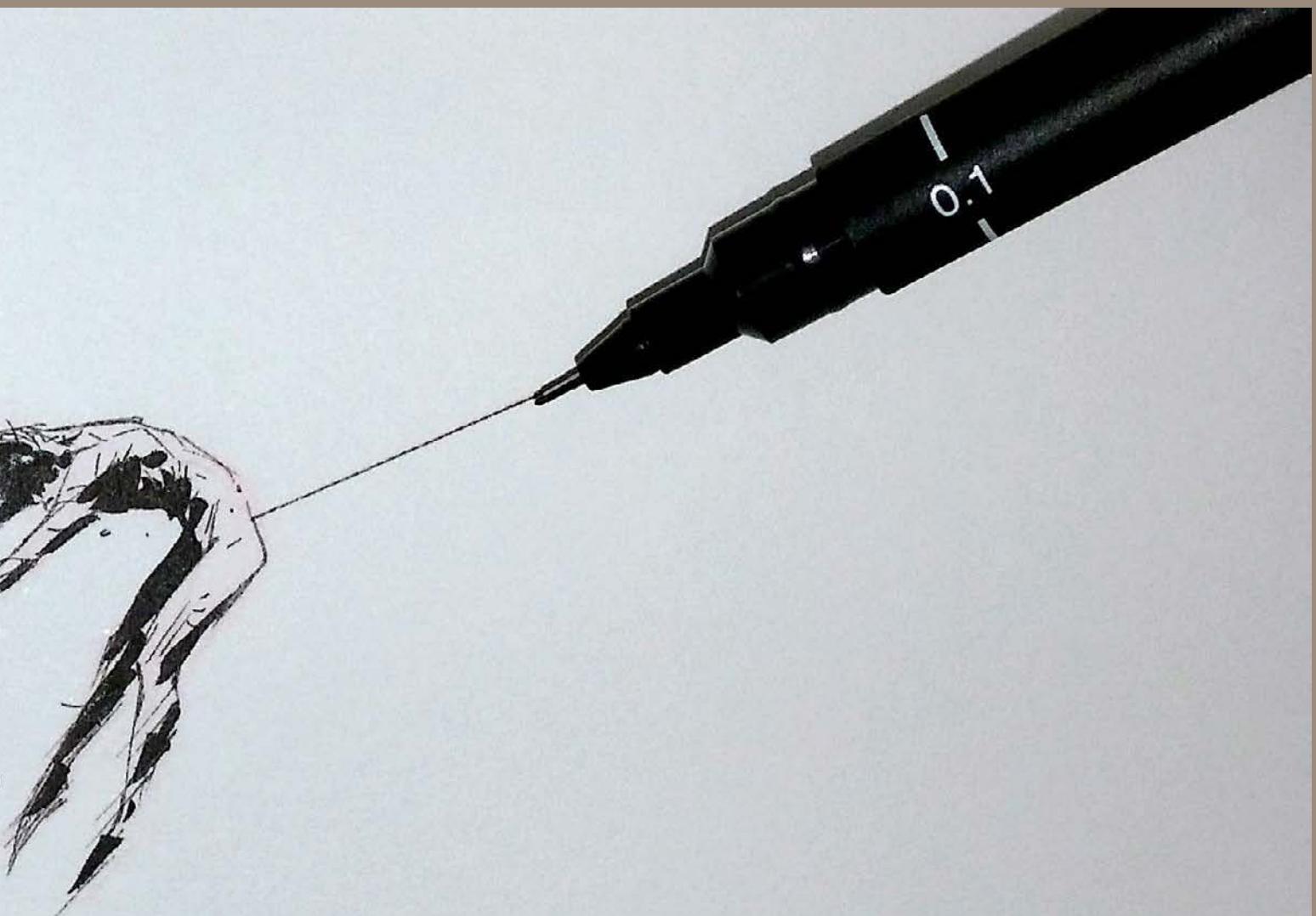
- The ink process in four steps: pencil drawing in red and blue, contour line to define shapes, inking with a Pentel brush, and shade passes with Copic markers



● This image symbolizes being dragged out from your artistic comfort zone



Koveck
2015



PRO TIP

Comfort zone

If you want to become a concept artist you must be open to other art styles, techniques and workflows. The trick is to have a clear knowledge of the basics: composition, anatomy, color and lighting. It does not matter if it is cartoon style or hyperrealism, if it's a robot or a dragon egg, the light has physics, the color has rules, the body has structure. If you know them, you can play with them and break the walls of your comfort zone. Learn the basics, open your mind, and draw everything.

Draw every day if possible. Not big drawings, not challenges, only simple things to lose the fear of the blank page. To progress quickly I suggest you combine: a) copying reality; b) copying from other artists (this is important because they have solved and found their solutions to the same problems you will face); c) the study of anatomy and lighting (it's a lot easier to copy anything if you understand how it's made and works, trust me); and d) drawing from imagination. If you combine these four ways of learning, they will produce a synergy between them. You will notice how you improve with each step, even when drawing from imagination, the thing that newcomers fear most. ●

PRO TIP

Doodles versus sketches

In my sketchbook there are two types of images: the regular sketches that are made from an idea previously captured in a thumbnail and with a pencil base, and the other type I call "doodles." These are made without any idea in mind and no pencil, only direct inking on automatic mode. They are made directly in ink, which means there is no going back, and no correcting. You will be forced to solve the inevitable errors with more inking, and during that process you will start to use the blacks wisely to mask the line mistakes.

- *Princess is dead* tells a story that the viewer can complete with a title that can evoke some context for the story



INKTOBER 2015 #24

- Giant characters such as the one in *Out of my way* are one Koveck's favorite drawing topics



- More doodles of astronauts



Would you like to see your sketches featured in 2dartist magazine?

We're always on the lookout for talented artists and their artwork to adorn the pages of our magazine. If you think you have what it takes, get in touch!

To submit, simply email Annie at annie@3dtotal.com with a selection of your images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



Submit your images! Simply email annie@3dtot.com



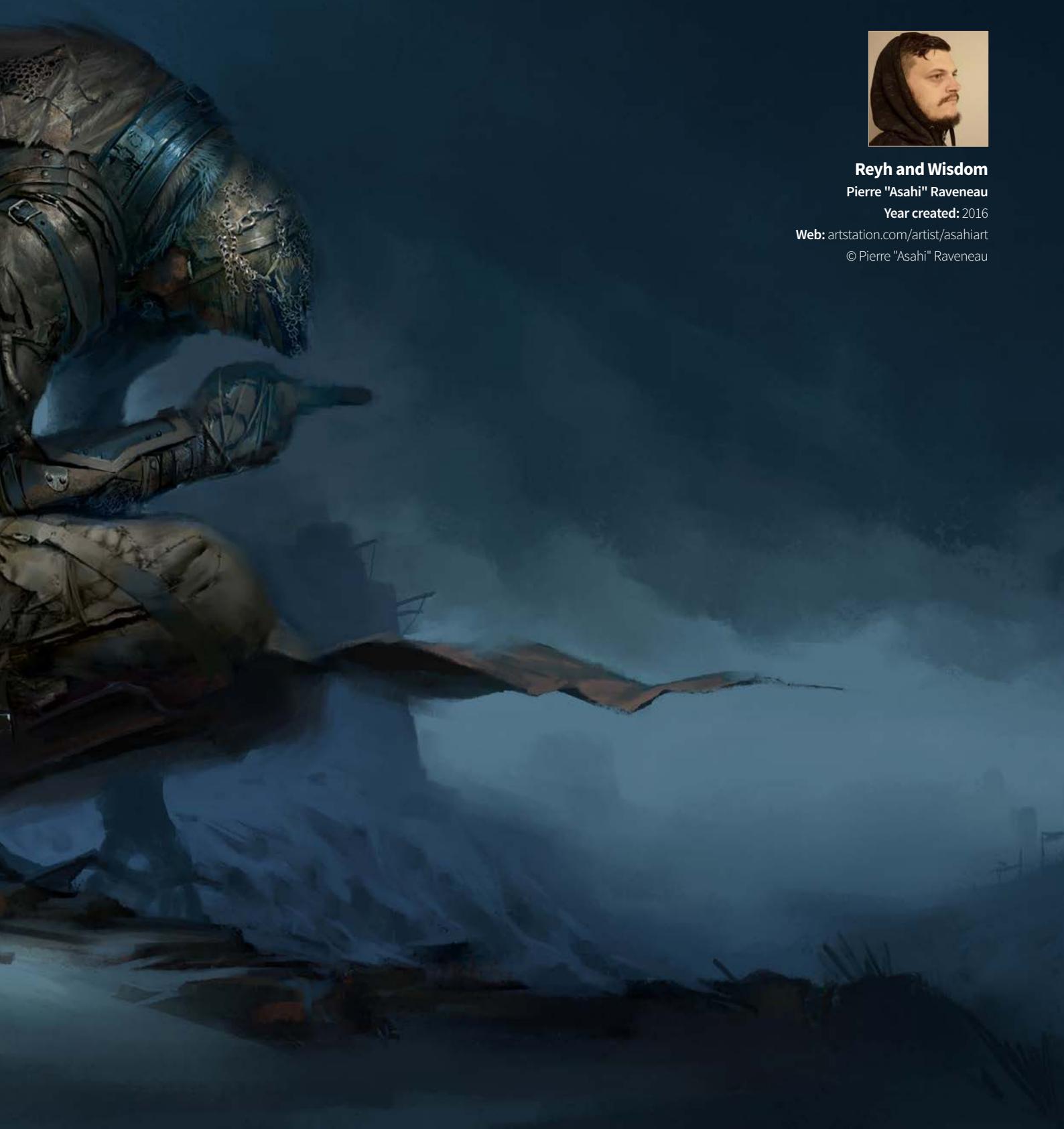
Reyh and Wisdom

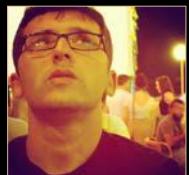
Pierre "Asahi" Raveneau

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/asahiar

© Pierre "Asahi" Raveneau





idiots

Ömer Tunç

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/mertun

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II — M.R.



Raven

Vera Velichko

Year created: 2016

Web: artlacertus.artstation.com

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The Traveler

Hueala Teodor

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/htartist

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Heaven of Softness

Florian Aupetit

Year created: 2016

Web: florianaupetit.com

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2DARTIST



Odus Apartments

Frank Hong

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CRUSH
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Front Line

Dominik Mayer

Year created: 2016

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Thieves Den
Shahab Alizadeh
Year created: 2016
Web: facebook.com/ShahabAlizadehArt
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Little gifts

Manuel Castañón

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Meteora

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* A SELECTION OF OUR ALUMNI'S ACHIEVEMENTS, CONGRATULATIONS TO THEM ALL.



Speed paint a medic mech

Learn how to quickly create an action scene with lighting effects using limited brushes 



The Artist



Thibault Girard
kailyze.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Thibault Girard is a concept and environment artist at FuturLab. He lives in the UK, is a French native, and is passionate about Japanese culture, sci-fi art and books.



See how focusing on core elements can help you tell a story quickly...

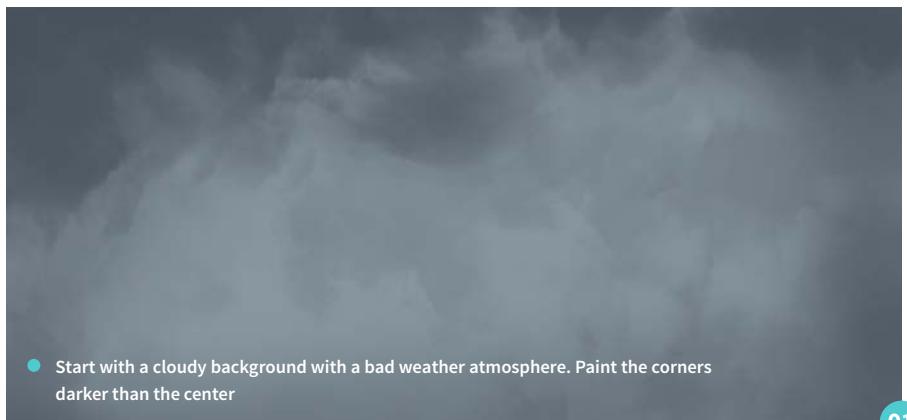
Whether it is within thirty minutes or two hours, time is short when speed painting so you have to focus on how to tell an exciting story in little time. Here I will show you how to create a speed painting using a “Medic Mech” as a theme. You will need to prepare some references from your favorite pictures or artists, anything to feed your mind while painting. A speed painting is not a finished concept; you are painting something from what you are familiar with and are here to make another nice piece of art with its story.

We will focus on very few key elements. Above all, keep your topic in mind and do all that you can to express it in your artwork while keeping it as simple as possible. Keep your silhouettes, colors, contrasts, and composition simple too. Do not use lots of characters or any crazy perspectives with hundreds of wires or circles in it. Ideally you should paint a maximum of one to two characters and any other character should be a simple rough shape. Most of the time evoking a simple human shape, barely defined, should suffice.

You will see that you have to sacrifice surface and texture painting for composition and a clean contrast. Depth is important to get a nice vibe and it can only work if you keep the different foreground, middle ground and background layers separated. To summarize, a speed painting is quite similar to any painting, the main difference will be in what you spend your time working on and choosing how to make some sacrifices. For this entire process, we will use basic brushes (the simple Photoshop Round brush in either 100% or 0% Hardness will do most of the strokes). Smoke, dust and particle brushes are also useful here, and that's it!

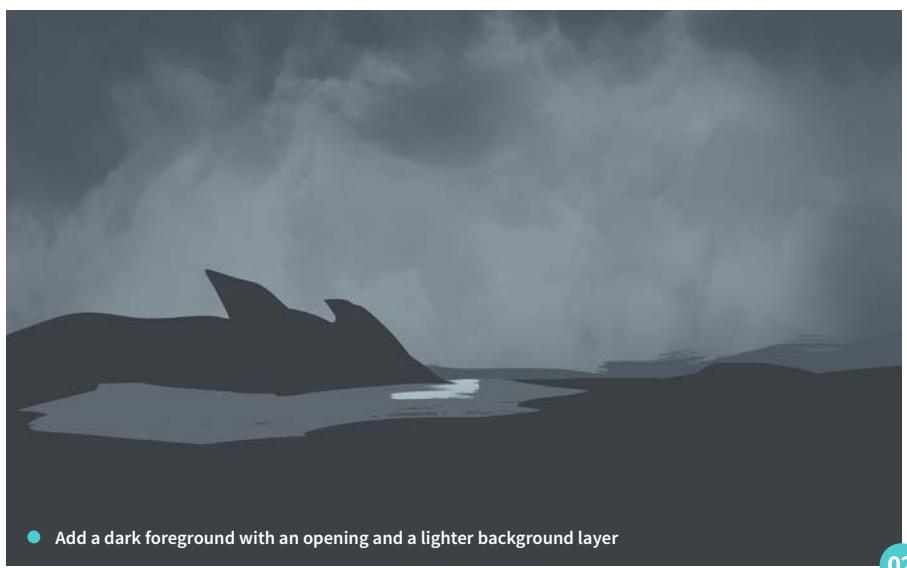
01 Creating an abstract background:

First let's create a story for the medic mech. Quickly brainstorm a situation that helps you to understand what is going on and what the story is. For instance, the medic mech could be healing an injured soldier on a battlefield. You would need to paint the mech, an injured guy, and the battlefield (let's keep this simple, the clock's ticking) and of course the action itself.



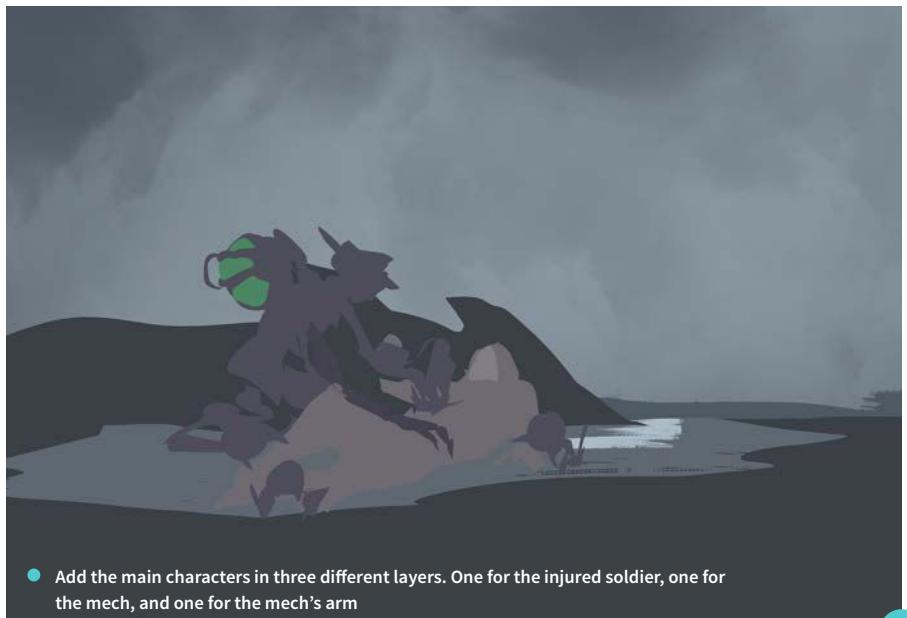
- Start with a cloudy background with a bad weather atmosphere. Paint the corners darker than the center

01



- Add a dark foreground with an opening and a lighter background layer

02



- Add the main characters in three different layers. One for the injured soldier, one for the mech, and one for the mech's arm

03

Start by creating, in a landscape canvas using a cloudy brush, an abstract background in a color of your choice depending on the ambience you wish to show. Here I create a cloudy, abstract background which is darker in the corners so that the focal area will stay in the center.

02 Surface placement: Go back to a simple round brush with the Hardness setting at 100% to stay clear. Place in the bottom third of the composition, the foreground surface where the action of the scene is taking place. This third is much easier to control in the time given.

Then paint the background surface too in a lighter shade. This gives you the first level of depth in your scenery. One surface where the main focus (the medic mech and the injured soldier) will be and a second surface for the battlefield action.

“The positioning of your characters is extremely important and should give a rough idea of what is going on in the scene”

Sculpt the shape of the foreground so that you have an opening to see what's going on in the background. Add a little area on the foreground surface where your main action is taking place.

03 **Signaling the main subject:** Let's not lose any more time – add your main protagonists in the foreground. The positioning of your characters is extremely important and should give a rough idea of what is going on in

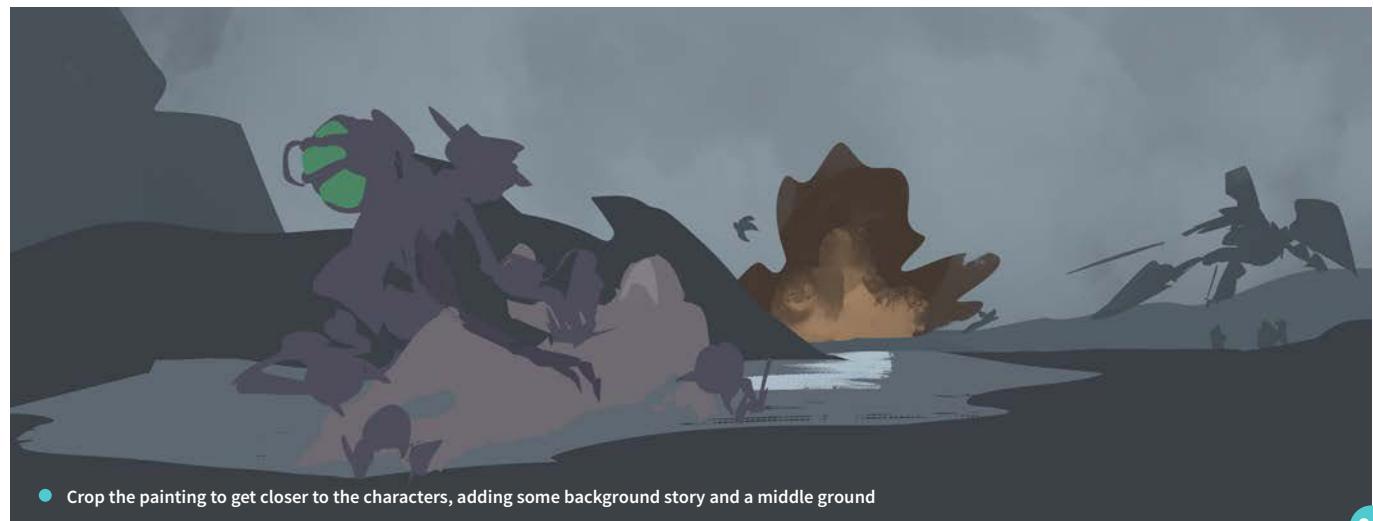
the scene. Since you do not have the time for details keep the silhouettes clear and simple. More than two characters will rapidly become a hard task to manage when you have to be fast (unless you are painting a roughly shaped crowd).

For now, keep your characters in different colors and on separate layers. Refine your silhouettes until you are satisfied with the shape but remember that spontaneity is the key. Also remember that many less important elements like the legs of the medic mech don't have to be finished at all, just drafted. Here, focus on the healing act centered on the hands of the mech and the torso and head of the injured soldier. Create another separate layer for the mech's arm.

04 **Background story:** There is too much space in the picture. Use the Crop tool to erase the empty space around your characters. Now that the focus is directed

more on the characters, add a middle ground mountain to create more depth in your scenery. This also helps the composition by filling the space on the left and therefore pushing the eye of the reader to the right, into the main action point of your characters. Start also to add some background action. This helps give an ambiance to the story in your painting and therefore give more depth of story to the injured soldier. A simple spider tank shooting and causing an explosion clearly shows that the scene is on a battlefield. As before, focus on the silhouettes and keep everything in the background grayish in color because this is not the main focus.

05 **Material composition:** It is time to start some material texture painting. Always remember that your foreground, where the main action is happening, is your priority. So let's add grass and some puddles to it by using “bad weather” colors with a flat



- Crop the painting to get closer to the characters, adding some background story and a middle ground

04



- Paint material textures in the foreground and begin detailing the characters attributes

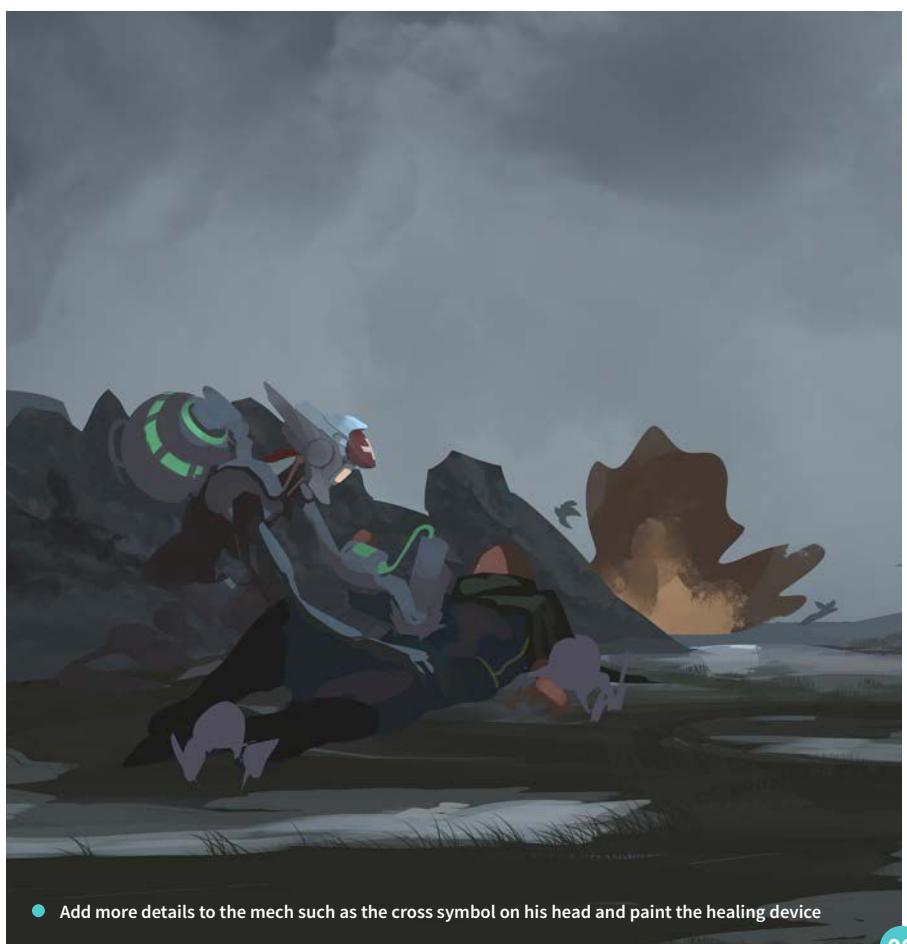
05

brush (you could simply flatten your round brush in the brush parameters window).

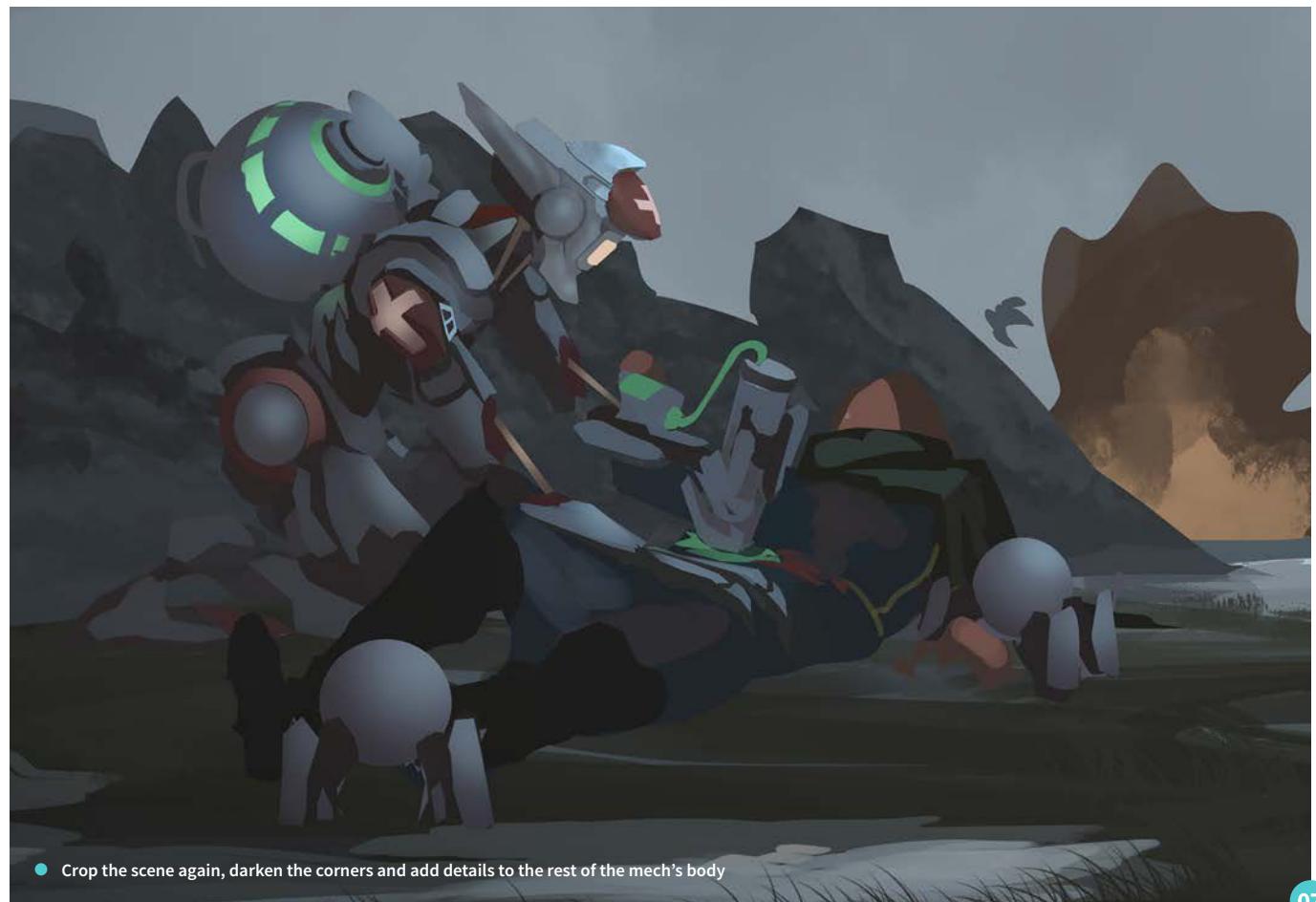
Use a grass brush for the edges. You can make this brush by drawing a couple of sharp shapes on a separate PSD and saving it as a brush. You can then scatter it in the brush presets. The rock on the left of image 05 is made using a rocky texture with a solid center and noisy edges. Do not contrast these textures too much otherwise they will catch the attention more than the characters.

Finally for this step, paint the first details of your characters. Indicate the eye of the mech to show where he is looking then detail the healing gas tank on his back, a bit of his hands and also the soldier's uniform. All of these will help the viewer identify what is happening in the scene.

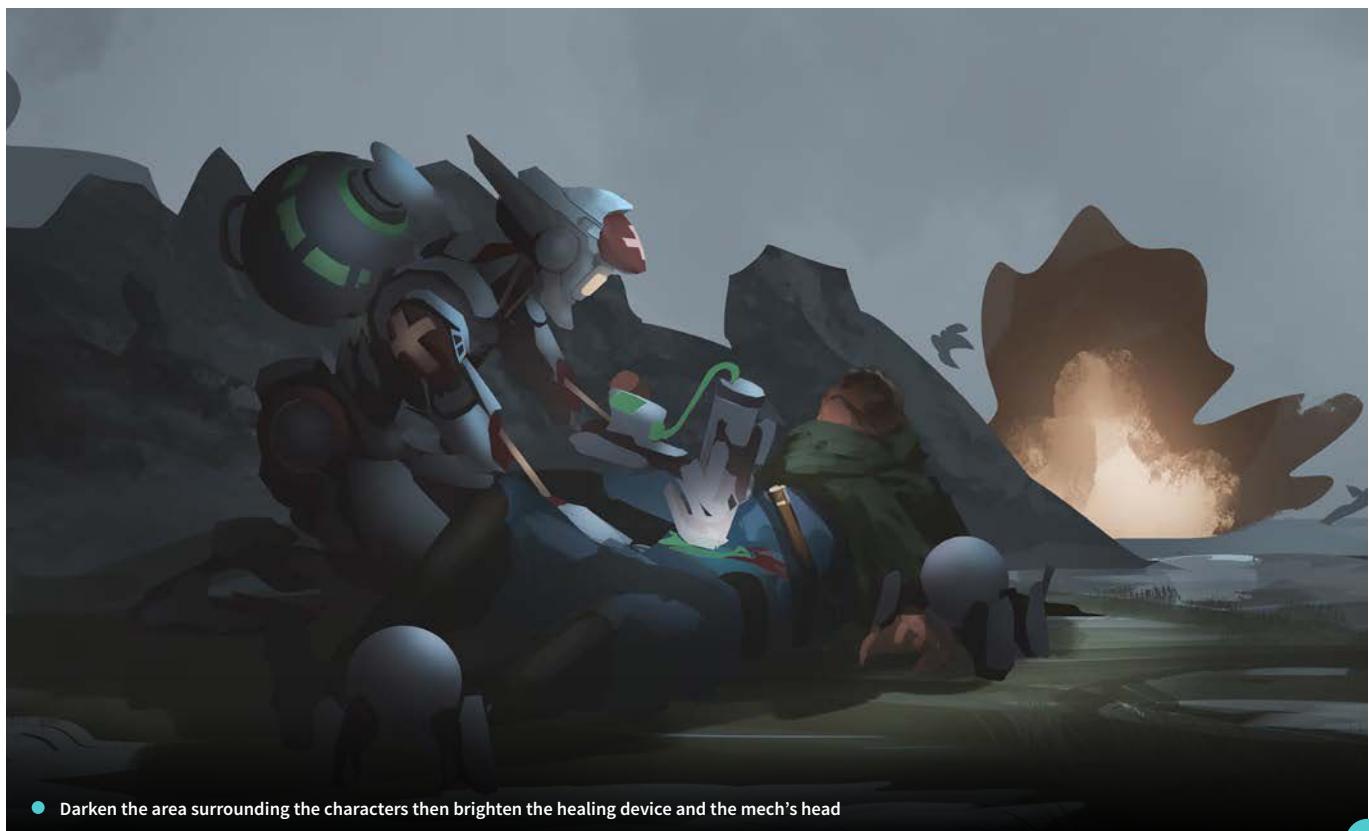
06 **Directing focus:** I Erase any excessive details that you know will be too much to produce in the time you have left. This is a speed paint so you will need to do some cuts otherwise you won't be able to focus properly on the essential points. You think it may be too complex? Then make it simpler.



06



07



- Darken the area surrounding the characters then brighten the healing device and the mech's head

08

The heads of main characters are visually important most of the time so focus on these. Even on a mech they show you who and what it is, and where to look. Continue working on the gas tank and the tool the mech is using to heal the soldier. Again, all these details are painted using the very basic Round brush with 100% Hardness. At this stage, flip your image horizontally to get a fresh look on your painting.

07 **Overall construction:** Crop the image again and add some ambient occlusion to help center the focus of the scene even more. Use your Round brush with 0% Hardness and set to a very big size. Use a Multiply layer and a dark color (preferably blue) for the corners. However, do not use too much of this color on the corners in the sky.

Add more details on the mech and the little robots lying next to the soldier. Now the painting of the mech is practically done. You don't need to add much more to him for a speed painting. These details include another cross on the arm (to suggest a medic mech unit) and new metallic parts of the body. These details are mostly top parts and are only what is necessary to tell the story.

08 **Lighting focus:** Focus only on the lights for now as enough has been done already for the shape and textures. Again, use multiple layers to darken the corners. Darken everything a little except the explosion and of course the action between the two main characters. Now with an Overlay layer, brighten the mech's head, the injection, and

a bit of the area around the injection. Make it look like a magical, powerful light if necessary.

Now that the explosion and the injection are much brighter than the rest of the scene, they are linked, and the cause (explosion) and consequence (the injured soldier) in the scene's story is clear. ▶

PRO TIPS

Practice within groups

If you want to see some progress in your speed painting make one every day, even a twenty or thirty minute one. Of course it won't be absolutely every day but try to achieve that objective until you think you have managed to reach a new level.

You can also join social network groups and participate in those. It is very efficient for your learning since not only you will train, and have fun painting those random themes, but you will also learn a lot from the others posting in the group. You will see crazy ideas and get useful critics, and posting in a group will push your work further as you know that people will see and comment on your work.

The Lasso tool

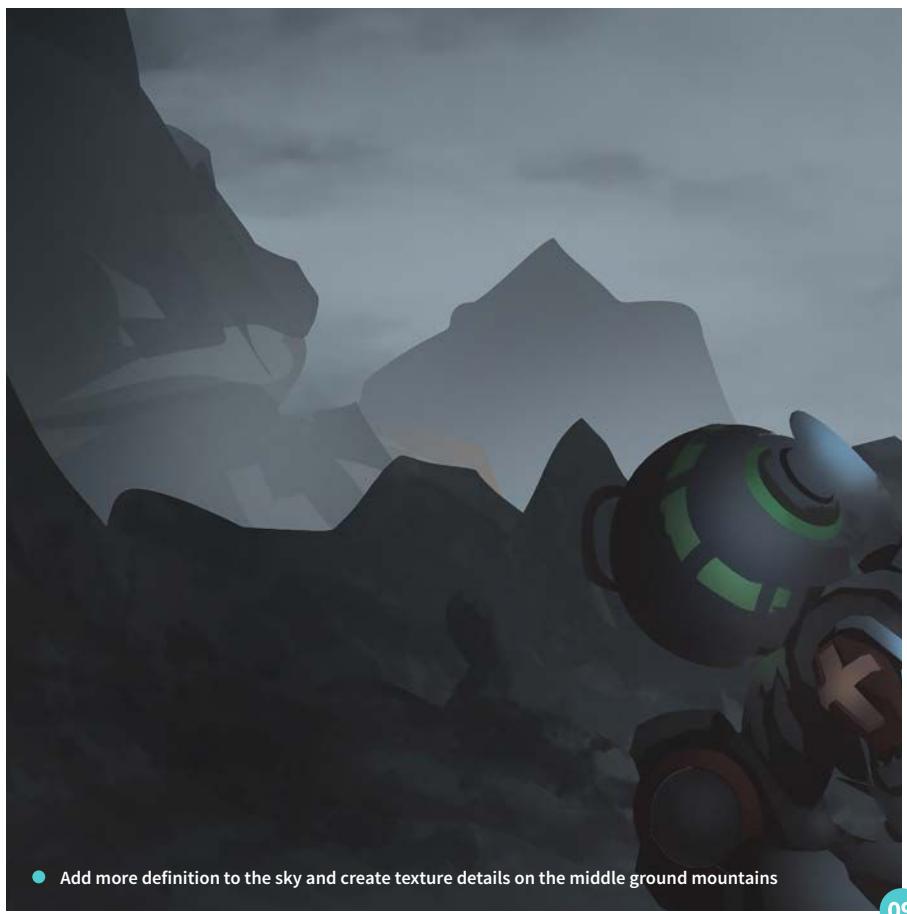
This tool will be your friend for speed paintings. Using the Lasso, you will be able to create a selection shape and paint a simple gradient in it in seconds. For instance, using the Lasso tool, you can get a mountain selection silhouette and then use gradients to darken the top and brighten the bottom. You will have a mountain in the far distance done in ten seconds.

The Lasso tool will let you have perfect control on your painting inside a shape and that shape edge will stay clean. It will also save you time at the end of your painting as you won't need as much time for cleaning.

09 **Background adjustments:** Let's return to the background. Give more depth to the sky by refining the clouds (any cloudy or dusty brush will do for this). A classic way to give depth is to paint the top of the sky darker and progressively paint brighter towards the horizon.

The middle ground needs a bit of a polish too, and a clearer separation between this and the foreground will help the depth. Using a basic very soft Round brush, add a gradient to the bottom of the middle ground picking the color from the bottom of the sky. Then add some details to the rocks by using the Lasso tool to make sharp shaped selections with a Round brush or a rocky brush. Finally, help the explosion look more powerful by adding an orange gradient in the area surrounding it.

10 **FX adjustments:** We can add more definition to the surface of the grass since this occupies a lot of the picture and is in the main foreground. Again, a grass brush and your good old basic hard Round brush will do for this. Add some details on the spider tank too, such as light from



09



10



- Use a Selective Color layer to rework your colors, grays, whites and blacks making the picture more dramatic

11

the explosion, as well as the injection. Lastly, add some particles with a scattered brush and a powerful light on the tip of the healing device.

“This is the power of digital painting, you can change colors and contrast in the blink of an eye”

11 **Mood coloring:** The mood of the scene is not quite right so we will need to adjust most of the colors. Luckily for us, this is the power of digital painting, you can change colors and contrast in the blink of an eye. Add a Selective Color layer on top of everything. Play with the colors to make them warmer or colder and make the grays, blacks and whites shine or disappear. Here a warmer sepia color will give a nice dark battlefield feeling.

Make the main characters colder in color so that they feel and look different from the rest of the scene. Blue works for a more peaceful atmosphere in the foreground compared to the battlefield in the background. Although do not let the red crosses on the mech's shoulders disappear or you will lose the impression of a



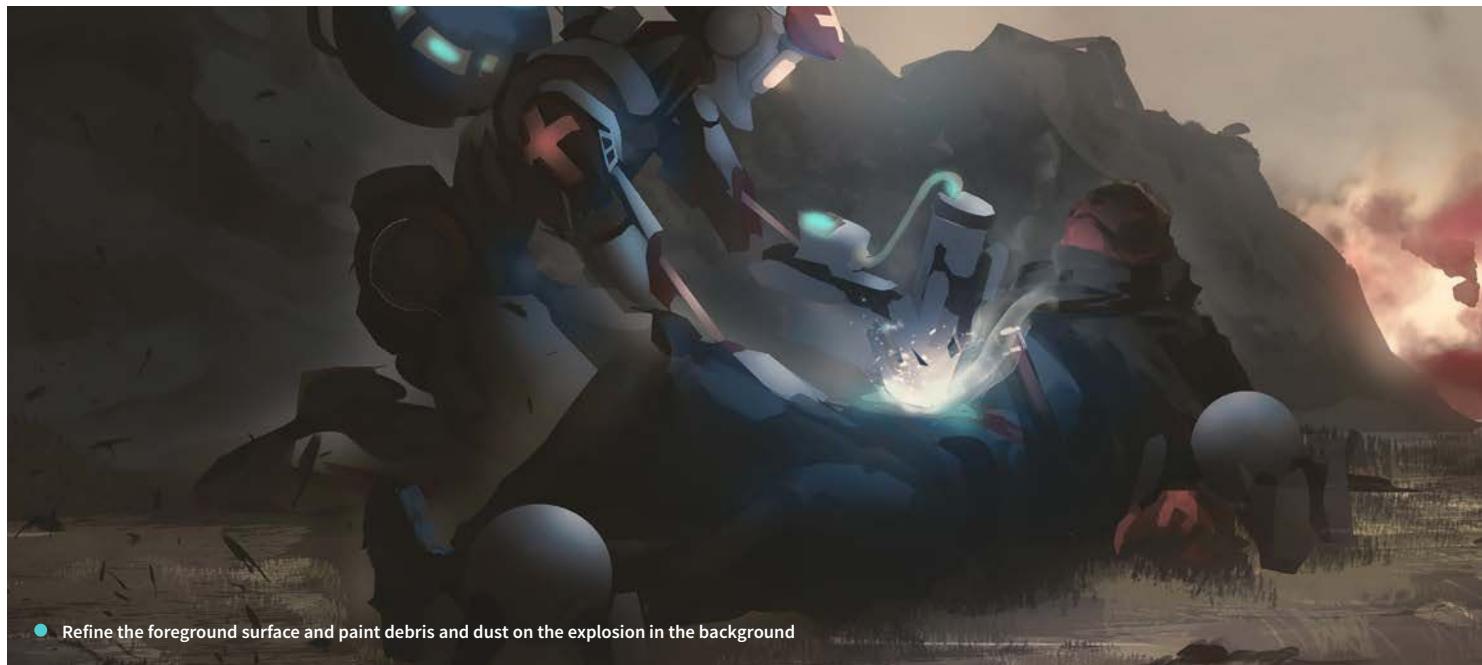
- A gradient between the characters and the foreground gives you a clearer picture of them

12

medic unit. By playing with the colors try to get an even brighter effect on the injection too.

12 **Silhouette cleaning:** There is not much to do here to tidy the silhouettes. Create a layer between your characters and the

foreground and by using a soft Round brush, with color picked from the sky, add some light fog behind the contours of your characters. Try to add some between the characters too. Doing so will make their silhouettes clearer and detach them further from the battlefield. After a good ▶



amount of work, and especially when speed painting, the clarity of the scene may be lost a bit. That clarity must be repaired if you want your image to be easy to read at first glance. Your main characters are your main story and your focus point so keep them clean and clear.

13 **Foreground details:** Playing with the contrasts and colors spoiled the foreground surface a bit. At some point you may have to refine it in a different way. To do this, add ground texture using a flat brush and then some pebbles using a flat rock brush. Using flat brushes helps you to paint surfaces without having anything popping out too abruptly so that the focus point stays on the characters.

Make the fog layer between your foreground and middle ground brighter to help separate these layers even more. Now, you can start to add little dust particles and debris effects. For instance, add some debris to the explosion in the background, using a scattered rock brush, to suggest an explosion of soil. Now add some dust in the foreground with a layer on top of all the others. Very importantly, carry on pushing the details on the mech such as his healing gas tank and the injector. They are your key elements.

“Add a bouncing light on the hairs and shoulder of the injured soldier to link him to the explosion”





13

14 **Story details:** Now we will focus only on the main characters again. The rest of the image is considered finished for a speed painting. I push the details on the injured soldier so that we can see his pain and how that healing is necessary but also difficult. I make the hand clearer since after the face, hands are useful to show emotions.

Continue also working on the bounce light from the injector impacting on the mech's torso so you can see him a bit more. Again the injured soldier, the mech's top, and the injector are your core elements so stay on them. Add some green color to the injector to make it clear that it is injecting the green gas from the mech's tank.

As a little extra, add a bouncing light on the hairs and shoulder of the injured soldier

to link him to the explosion. It is not a big detail but it shows that the fight is behind him and that he went through it.

15 **Final adjustments:** In the final step there is not much left to do. You should have a couple of minutes to spare so use them for adjustments and polishing. Play with the contrast of the mech's injector and darken the mech's forearm, but make the green really bright and colorful to show it is being used.

Add some smoke to the soldier's injury with a very blurred, soft brush and a super bright green emitting from it showing a rough healing process. This will improve the drama in the picture. Finally, make some small corrections on the brighter parts of the characters such as the rim lights, and clean any dirty brushstrokes, and you're all done! ●



14

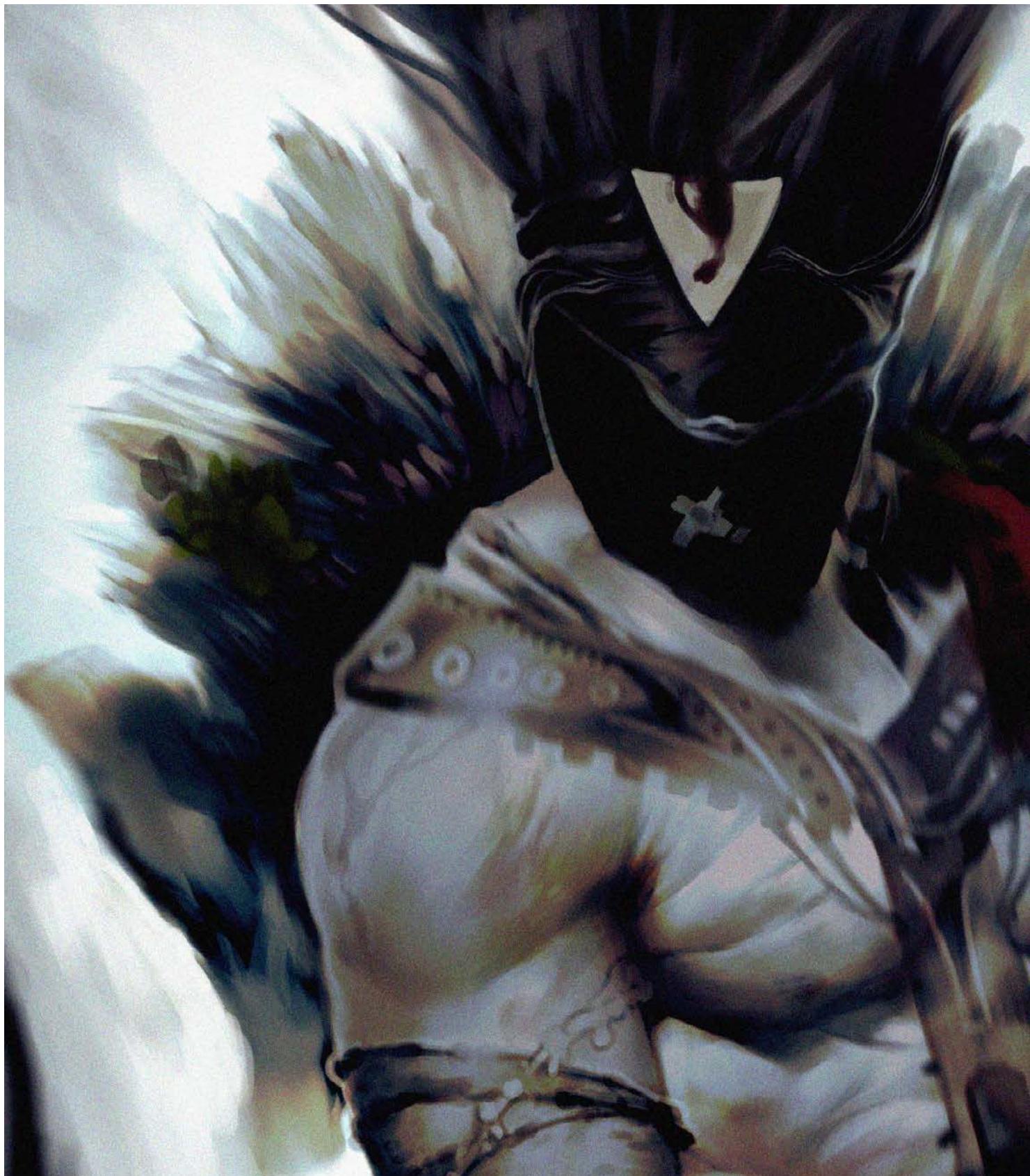


The Artist



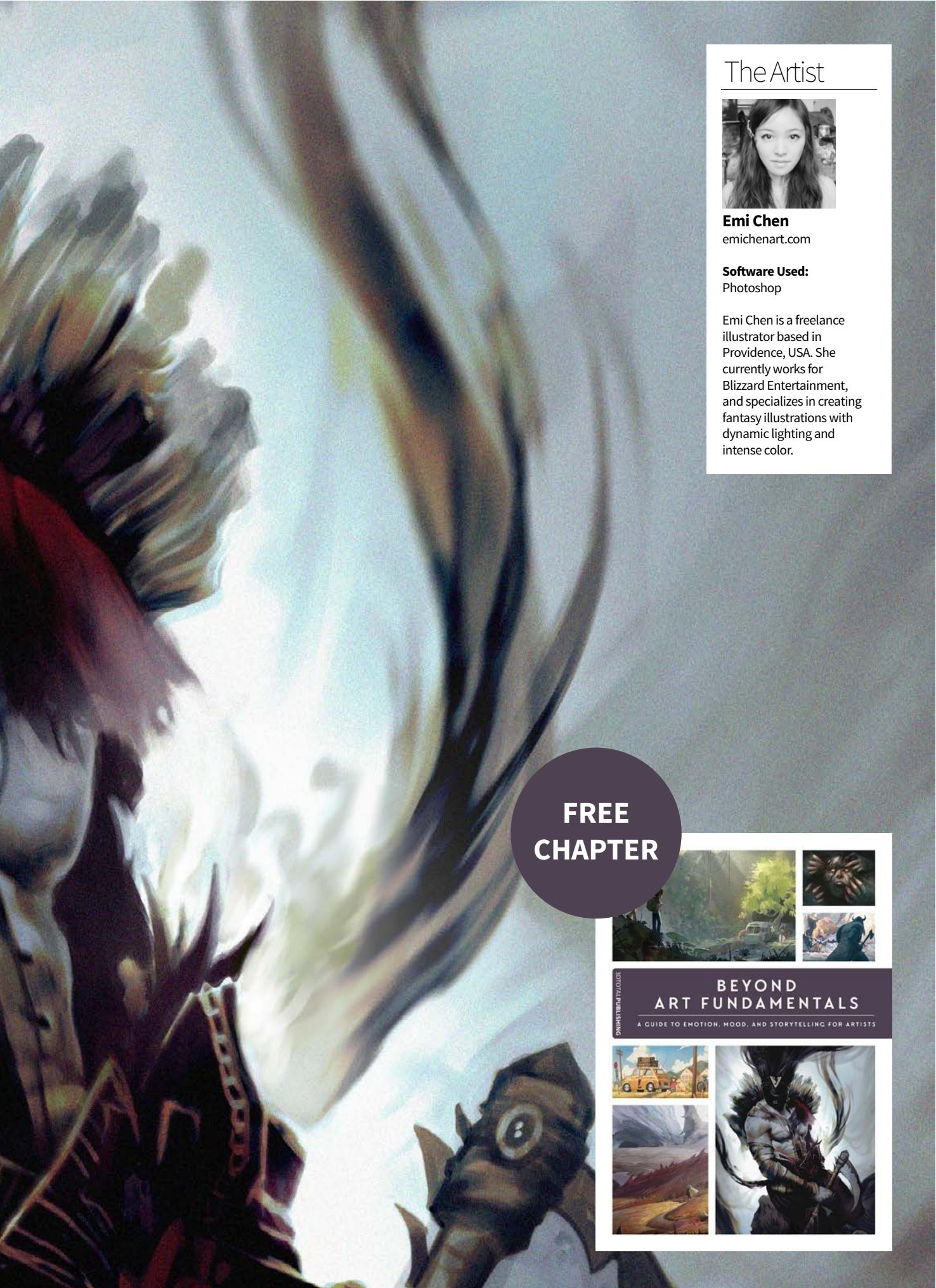
Thibault Girard
kailyze.com

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Design a mysterious character

Learn how to imbue your artwork with mystery using symbolic imagery and muted colors 



The Artist



Emi Chen
emichenart.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Emi Chen is a freelance illustrator based in Providence, USA. She currently works for Blizzard Entertainment, and specializes in creating fantasy illustrations with dynamic lighting and intense color.

FREE CHAPTER



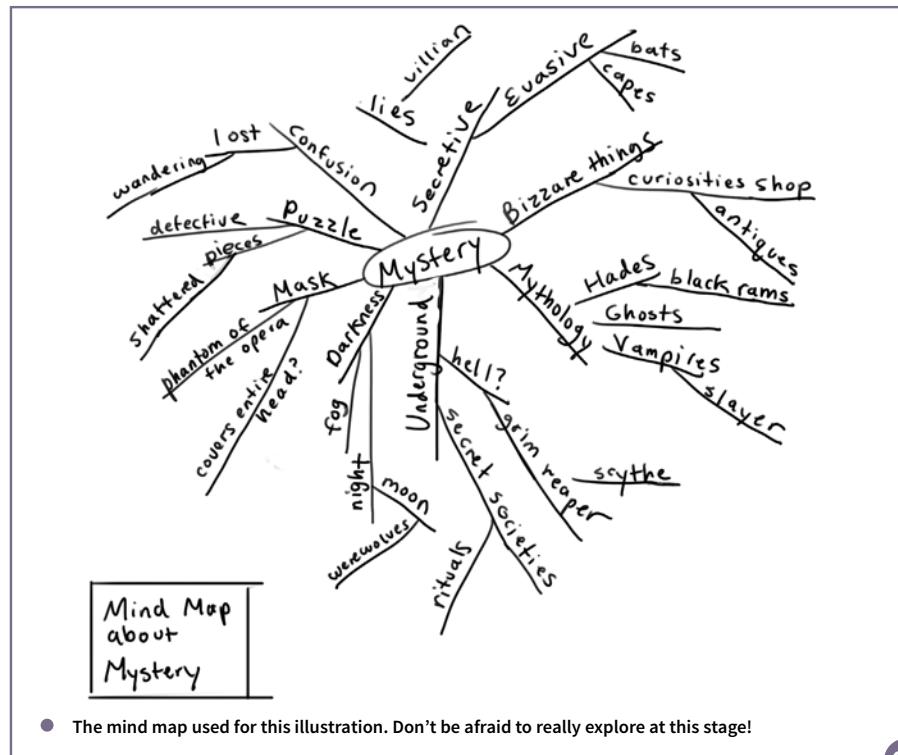
BEYOND
ART FUNDAMENTALS
A GUIDE TO EMOTION, MOOD, AND STORYTELLING FOR ARTISTS



Get tips on adding emotion into your illustrations...

In this tutorial I will show my process for creating a fully rendered illustration. I will focus on topics including idea generation, creating mood and atmosphere, and symbolism. In addition, I will go over some formal aspects of illustration such as composition, design, value, and anatomy.

In this image the theme is “mystery,” and a lot of the decisions I make are based on trying to portray a mysterious feeling; I need to create an image that has an enigmatic sense to it. There are many aspects of this illustration that work towards trying to achieve that theme, and I will go through all of them step by step. By the end of this tutorial you will have the tool set to create your own illustration with a mysterious theme.



- The mind map used for this illustration. Don't be afraid to really explore at this stage!

01

01 **Mind map:** A mind diagram of related thoughts and words about a subject. It includes a branching-out of ideas from a central starting point. In this case, I want the illustration to revolve around the concept of “mystery,” so I create a mind map with the focus on this word and what comes to mind. From there, I keep exploring various themes and subjects that relate to the word. I try to exhaust all possibilities, exploring everything that I can until I am sure there are absolutely no more related ideas left.

“This is when I begin to think about composition and what would look aesthetically pleasing”

02 **thumbnails:** Once I have a good understanding of the concept through words, I start creating thumbnails. This is when I begin to think about composition and what would look aesthetically pleasing. I also consider narrative. I typically limit myself to only three values for thumbnails. This helps me break down the shape design more easily, and allows me to organize the image into manageable parts. Typically, I make about twenty thumbnails for an illustration, but sometimes I make more depending on how many ideas I come up with that day.



- Notice how small and rough these thumbnails are, just focusing on shape and design

02

03 **Sketches:** Next, I choose three of the thumbnails that I think work best both narratively and compositionally, and start to flesh out these ideas further. I begin to paint in the anatomical gesture, and hint at material texture. I try to avoid over-rendering and detailing at this stage, since I know that I will eventually be throwing two of the sketches away. At this point, it is still only about the story and design. If adding something contributes significantly to either of those two aspects, I add it. If not, I leave it out for now.

I choose the first sketch in image 03 to take to the next step because it has the clearest flow and contrast, and the smoky, ethereal background fits the concept of “mystery.”

“I decide to turn towards Greek mythology for inspiration; I’ve always found that the idea of an afterlife is shrouded in mystery”



● Three compositions chosen from the thumbnails. The ideas that show potential are explored further in this sketch stage

03

04 **Designing the character:** Now that I have chosen the sketch I will take to completion, it is time to add specificity. Because this is a character illustration, the figure is the focus of the image. I therefore need to make sure that it is well designed and interesting to look at. I decide to turn towards Greek mythology for inspiration; I’ve always found that the idea of an afterlife is shrouded in mystery, as is the character Hades. I look

at classical sculpture as well as ancient Greek clothing design when designing the costume.

05 **Adding details and symbolism:** Now that I have the basic character design laid out, I can start to add detail and render the costume. At this stage, I pay more attention to making sure all the materials are readable. For example, fur needs to look fluffy and metal needs to look reflective. I work on refining my brushwork ▶



● Focus on the character design here



● In this step, start to build up the costume

04

05

so that it looks neat and clean. During this stage, I realize that it would be conceptually strong to add a scythe to the image because it evokes themes of death and the Grim Reaper, a well-known figure who is also conjures up mystery.

06 **Levels adjustments:** I realize that the image no longer reads as well as the smaller sketch did because there is too much midtone and darkness in it. In order to correct this, I add more contrast, making the overall image brighter and darkening the darker values.

Using Levels in Adobe Photoshop is a great way to add contrast, but it usually leaves the image looking a bit messy, often changing certain areas in a way that I did not intend.

I therefore always end up painting over the adjustment or erasing portions of it.

07 **More symbolism:** In order to really push the symbolism and story in this image, I decide to add some rams. Traditionally, herding sheep is known to be an action associated with heavenly or angelical themes. I want to use this symbolism to my advantage; not only is the character inspired by Hades, but the black ram is an animal known to symbolize Hades himself. I decide to show him herding sheep, but with a darker twist. Instead of holding a shepherd's staff, he is controlling the sheep using the Grim Reaper's scythe. This presents something of intrigue to the audience, adding to the feeling of mystery.



● Correcting the amount of contrast in the image to improve its readability

06

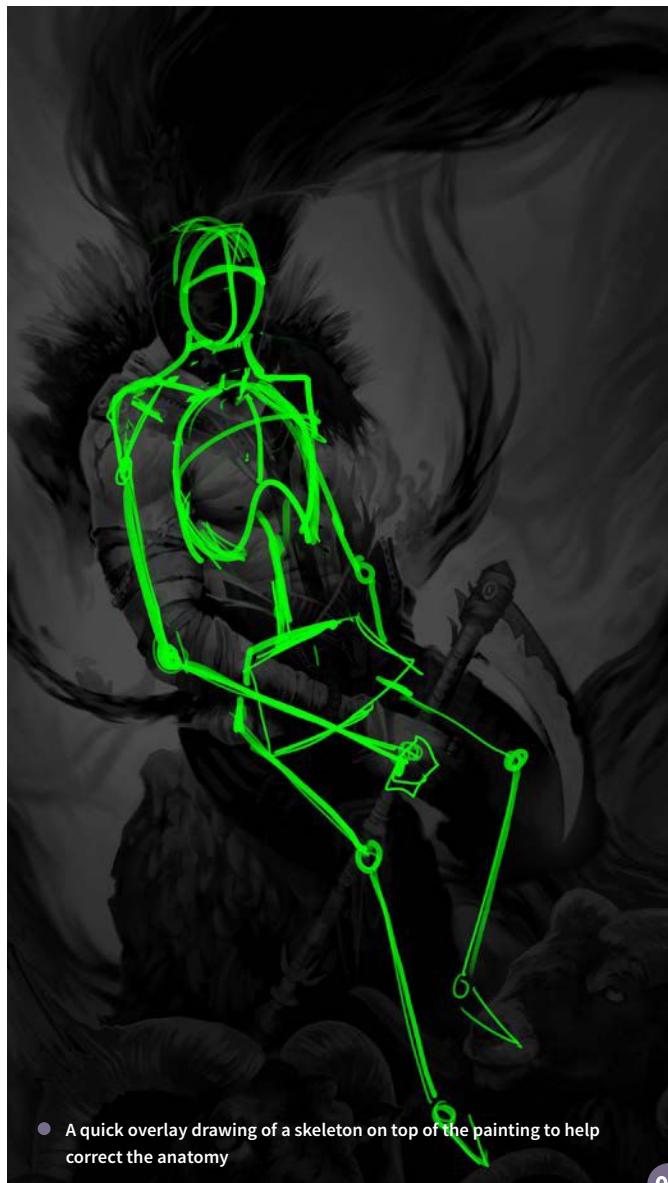


● A close-up of the sheep and scythe

07

08 **Checking anatomy:** In order to make sure the proportions and anatomy are correct, I produce a quick overlay drawing where I only look at the placements of the major bones. From here I can spot anatomical issues and make adjustments accordingly; I suggest referencing Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. His calculations base everything around using the head as a reference measurement, a method which improves accuracy and helps to simplify everything. Other things you can do to improve anatomy are attending live figure drawing sessions and memorizing muscle shapes. After I know what needs to be adjusted, I can start working to make those changes. ▶

“Although details like this are small, they really do help a lot with the storytelling, and with creating a convincing image”



08

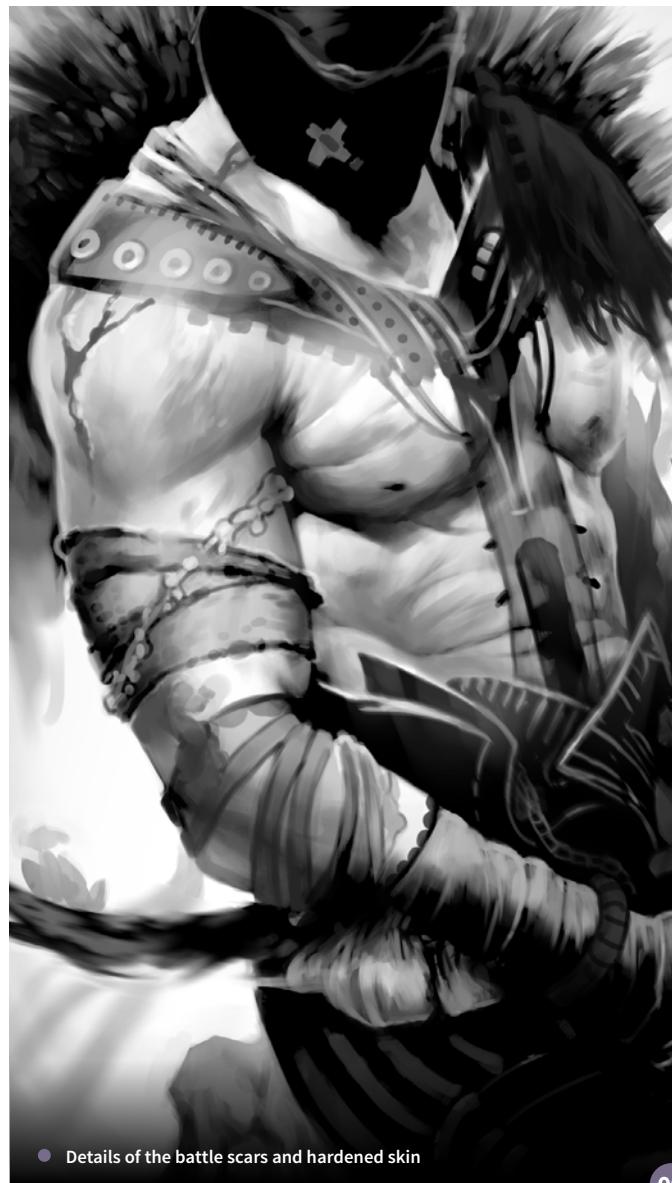
PRO TIPS

Attend local figure drawing sessions

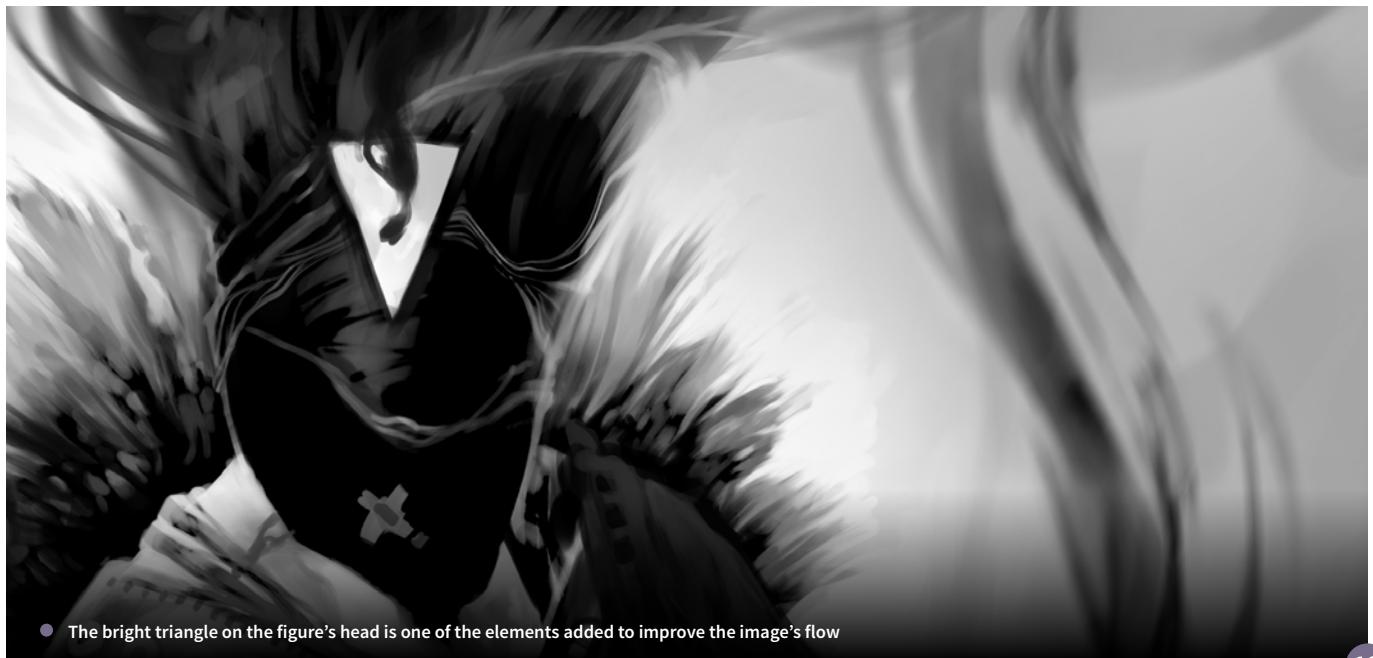
If you have figure drawing sessions available in your area, you should take advantage of them! Figure drawing teaches gesture, and allows you to practice working under a time limit. The presence of a live model is also great for gaining a sense of light and form that cannot be seen in a photo. Because the poses are usually very quick, it pushes the artist to capture only what is necessary. Even the longer poses are often limited to twenty minutes, so I have found that figure drawing sessions have taught me how to pace myself when drawing.

If you haven't already, learn traditional mediums

From an educational standpoint, traditional mediums are great because they are limiting. There are no undo buttons or layers, so working traditionally teaches you to think and plan out your design before you work. In addition, there are no quick color adjustment options either, so you really have to think about color a lot more. When painting, you have to mix your own colors (rather than selecting them from a menu), which requires advanced understanding of color theory. Personally, my favorite traditional mediums are graphite, acrylic, and oil.



09



- The bright triangle on the figure's head is one of the elements added to improve the image's flow

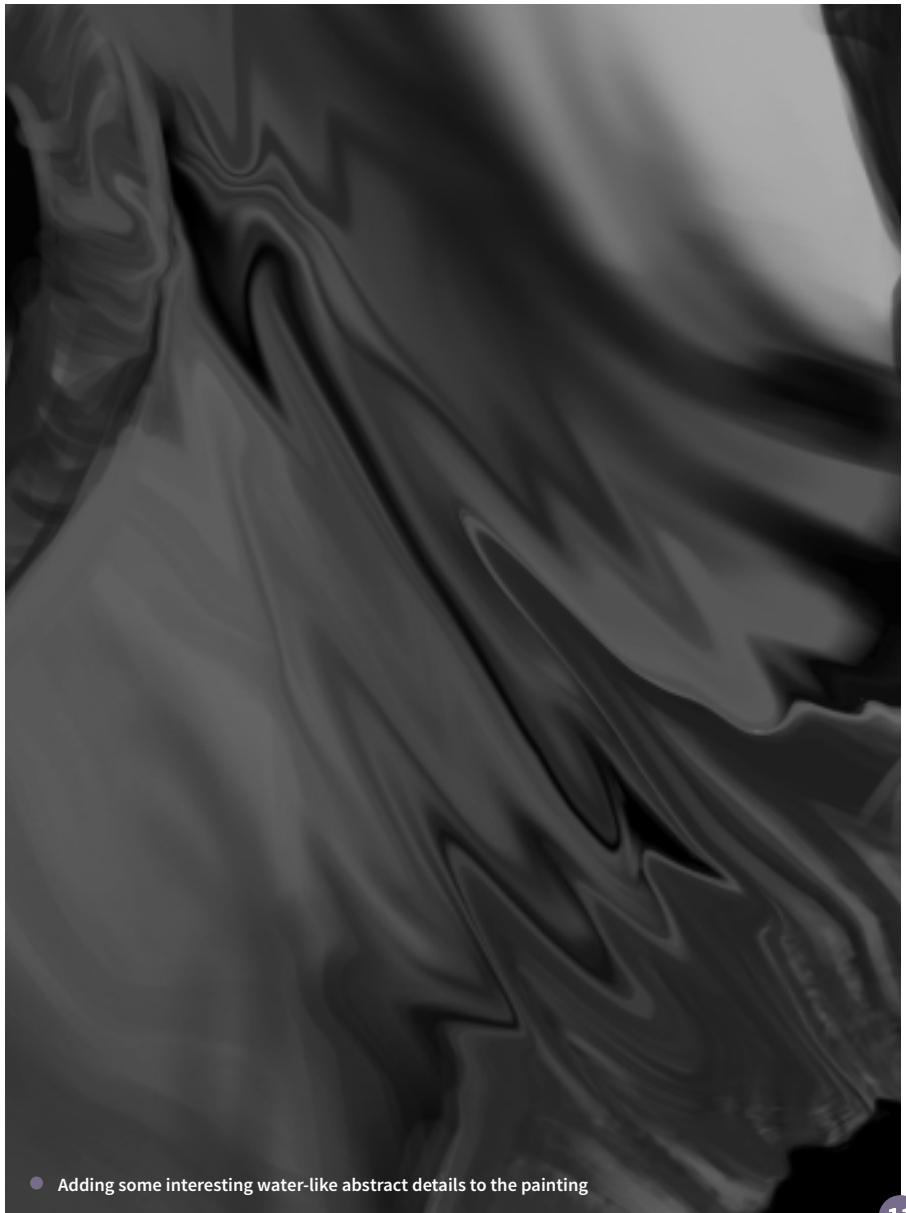
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09 **Adding anatomical details:** I want the character to have a more worn-down, old look, as if he has been through some hard battles. This will add to the narrative behind the image and invite the viewer to wonder where he has come from. I add some textures and battle scars to his skin, making his exterior slightly tighter to imply that he's not a young hero. Although details like this are small, they really do help a lot with the storytelling, and with creating a convincing image.

“Being able to move through the image with ease is one of the most important elements in establishing gracefulness in design”

10 **Improving flow and composition:** In order to improve flow, I add a bright triangle near the top of the figure's head. This helps direct the viewer's attention to the focal point. I've found that triangle shapes are great to work with compositionally because they can act as arrows that point the viewer in the right direction. Other parts of the image that help improve flow are the lines in the background, which all lead to the figure. In my opinion, being able to move through the image with ease is one of the most important elements in establishing gracefulness in design.

11 **Abstract details:** This image in particular has a lot of abstract qualities to it (which are necessary for the theme of



- Adding some interesting water-like abstract details to the painting

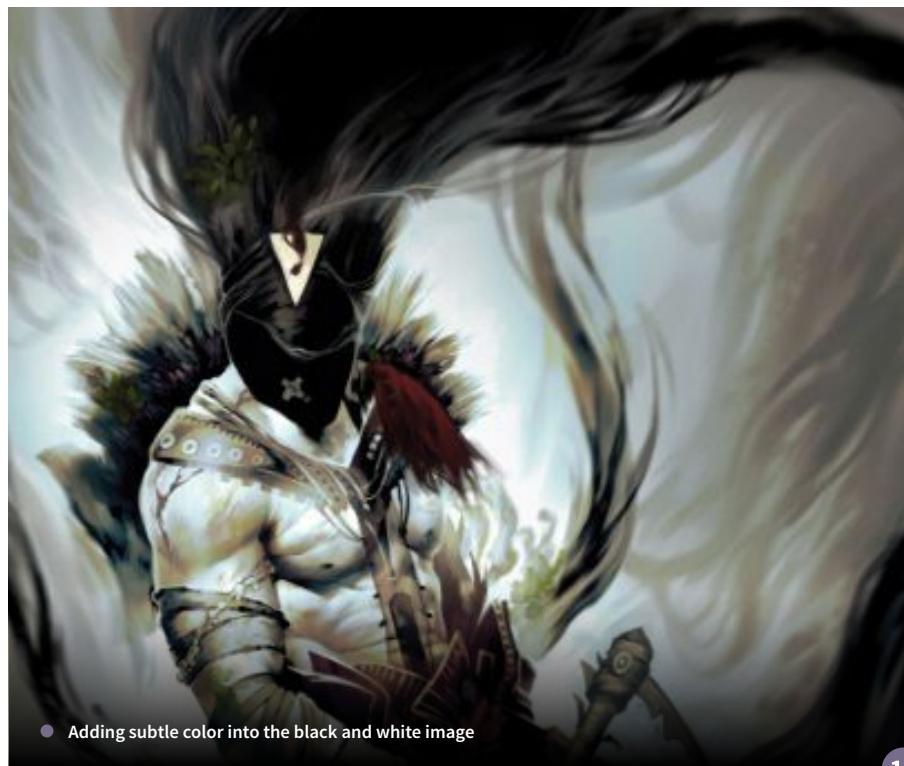
11

“mystery”). A great way to get quick abstract amorphous shapes is to use the Forward Warp tool in the Liquify filter in Photoshop. It creates an almost water-like texture which fits very well into the overall image. However, it’s important not to go overboard. I make sure I only choose a few places to use this technique in as the image can quickly look garish if it is applied too much. Look at references of smoke and water if you are painting this effect traditionally.

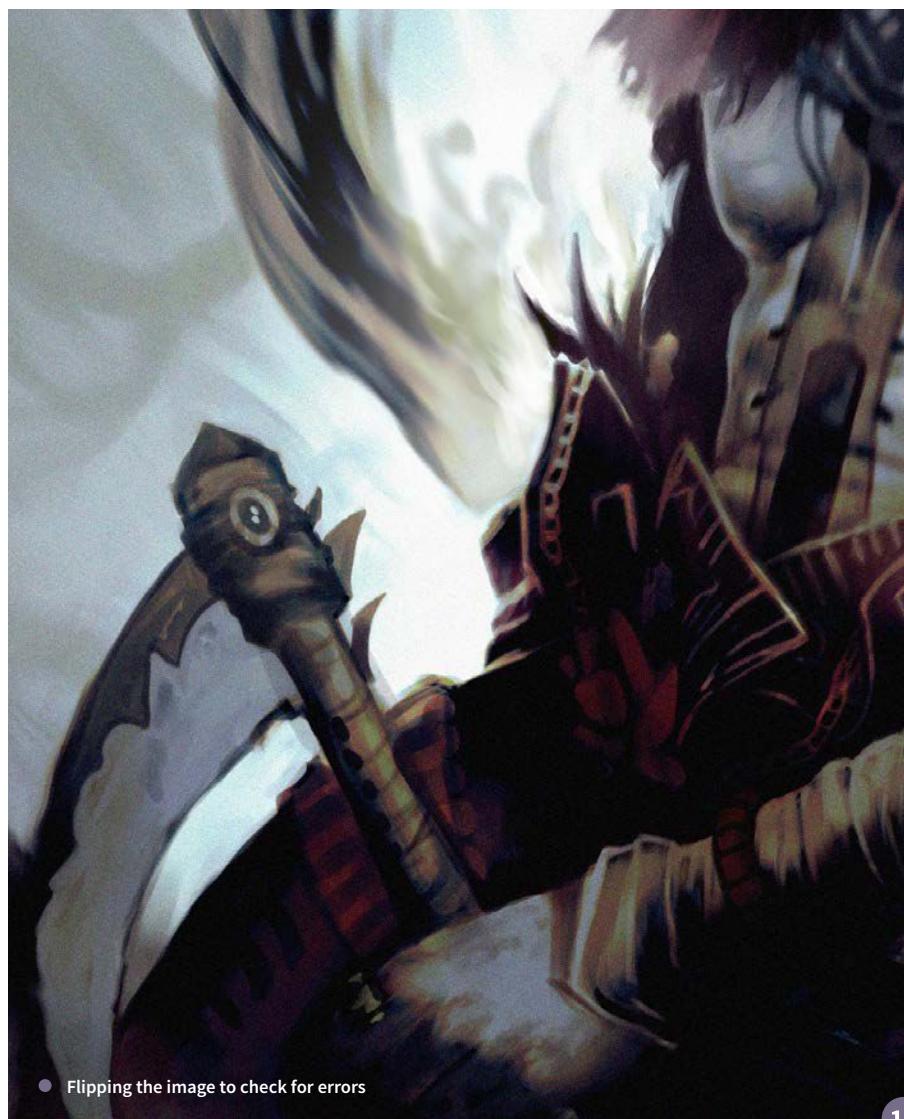
12 **Adding muted color:** Now I start to add a hint of color. I don’t want this image to be too saturated, because that would take away from its enigmatic quality. I opt for a limited palette with red as the accent color. In order to quickly add color to a black and white image, I use Photoshop’s Color Balance feature. This allows me to control the hue of the highlights, midtones, and shadows separately. In addition, it makes very subtle changes to the values, which are usually pleasing.

13 **Darkening the image:** After looking at the image for a long time, I realize that the lighting would make more sense if the figure was backlit, putting him in silhouette. Having a silhouetted character will help my goal of creating mystery because the character will be darkened and thus appear more obscured. This step also helps to simplify the composition, making the image easier to read visually. I tend to flip the image horizontally a lot during these final stages to make sure there are no small errors or mistakes in the image.

14 **Last tweaks:** I now refine the tiny details and render things out. This is the step when I can relax and not really focus on making any major changes. All the hard work is done; I can just focus on getting all the final details right to enhance the feeling of mystery in the illustration. ●



12



13

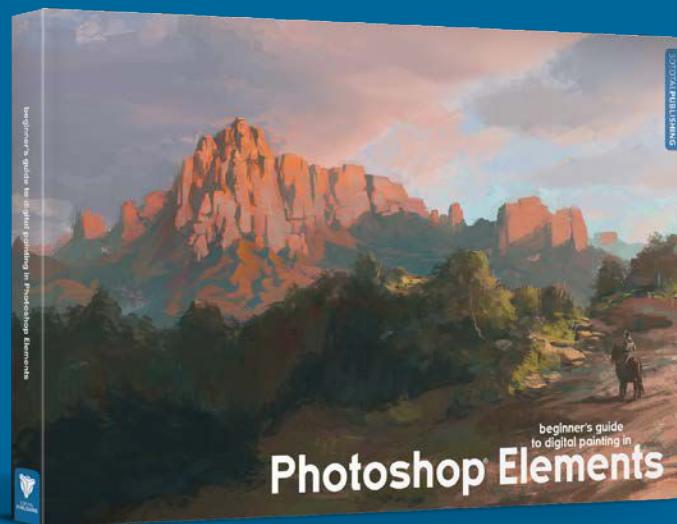






Photoshop® Elements

The *Beginner's Guide* series is back with a clear and comprehensive look at working in Adobe Photoshop Elements.

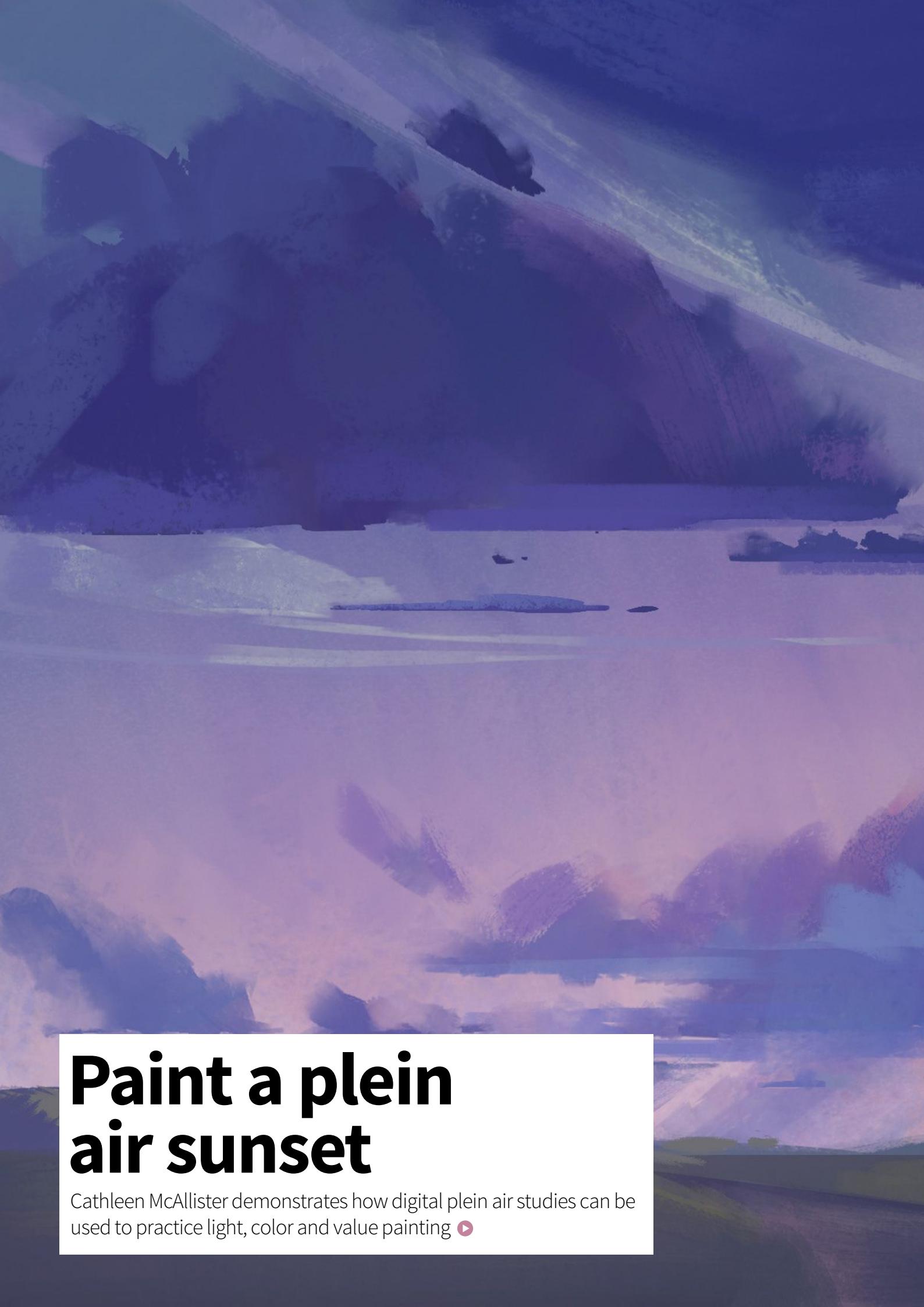


In this sequel to the best-selling *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop* book, a new set of talented artists break down the best and simplest techniques for creating amazing artwork in Photoshop Elements. This fundamental guide offers easy-to-follow steps that guide you through setting up your software, working with brushes and basic art theory, as well as chapters on creating certain artistic styles.

With a simplified interface and fewer variable parameters to learn than its big brother, *Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements* is an ideal tool for any artist's first digital adventure. This book is therefore a perfect resource for:

- Newcomers to *Photoshop* and digital painting
- Artists looking to switch from a traditional medium
- Lecturers and students teaching/studying digital art courses
- Hobbyists who want to learn useful tips

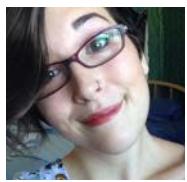
Available from www.3dtotal.com/shop



Paint a plein air sunset

Cathleen McAllister demonstrates how digital plein air studies can be used to practice light, color and value painting ➤

The Artist



Cathleen McAllister
cathleenconcepts.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Cathleen McAllister is a visual development artist from Los Angeles, USA. She currently works for animation company Reel FX. She specializes in painting environments, architecture, props, and generating mood paintings.

Get tips for working outside and painting a changing environment...

In this tutorial, we will cover how to paint a cloud-filled sunset from life on a digital plein air setup. Golden hour, the hour before the sun sets, is one of the most beautiful and engaging times of day. Learning what a real sunset looks like, and how to paint it, can really help your concept art and illustration.

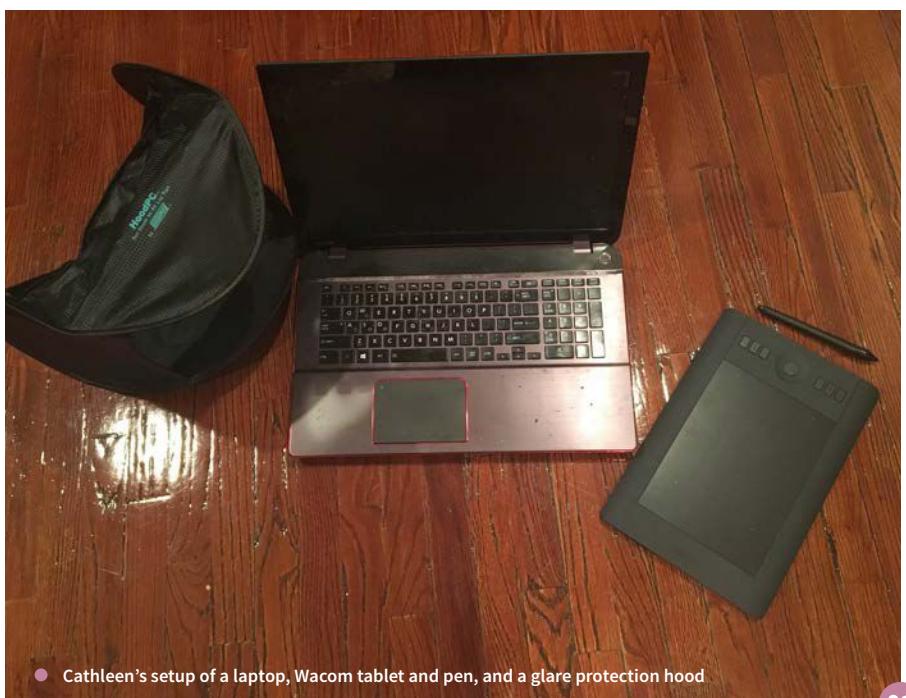
Plein air painting is a vital skill for any concept artist because you can build a mental library of color palettes and lighting scenarios to use in your paintings. In this tutorial, we will cover composition, value, color, lighting, and shape design, and how all of these fundamentals come together in plein air painting. I will be working on a laptop and Wacom tablet for this tutorial, but you can also use ProCreate on an iPad.

01 **Digital plein air setup:** My plein air setup consists of a laptop (I use a Surface Pro 4) stacked on top of a small Intuos Pro tablet, and a glare protection hood. I have all of the buttons I will need hot-keyed into the tablet. These include shortcuts to: Brush Size, Zoom, the Lasso tool, Alt, Shift, the Hand tool, Free Transform, Enter, and a menu of common Photoshop adjustments like Hue/Saturation, Levels, and Color Balance.

Alternatively, you can follow this tutorial using ProCreate on the iPad for a quick block-in, and export the layered image to Photoshop during the later steps. ProCreate is an inexpensive app, especially if you already have an iPad or even an iPhone, and works well with a Wacom or Apple stylus. Although I will be explaining this tutorial in Photoshop, it should be relatively easy to follow along with ProCreate. Regardless of which setup you choose, make sure your devices are fully charged before going anywhere!

02 **Finding a spot:** When painting during golden hour, it is important to remember that the sky at sunset changes rapidly, and can go from beautiful and bright, to night-time very quickly! For this reason, it is important to set up early, at least an hour and a half before sunset. This way, you can do your sketching and value compositions first, and then focus on just the colors when the lighting is ideal.

When looking for a spot, I love to find hiking trails, fields, parks, or even outdoor cafés that



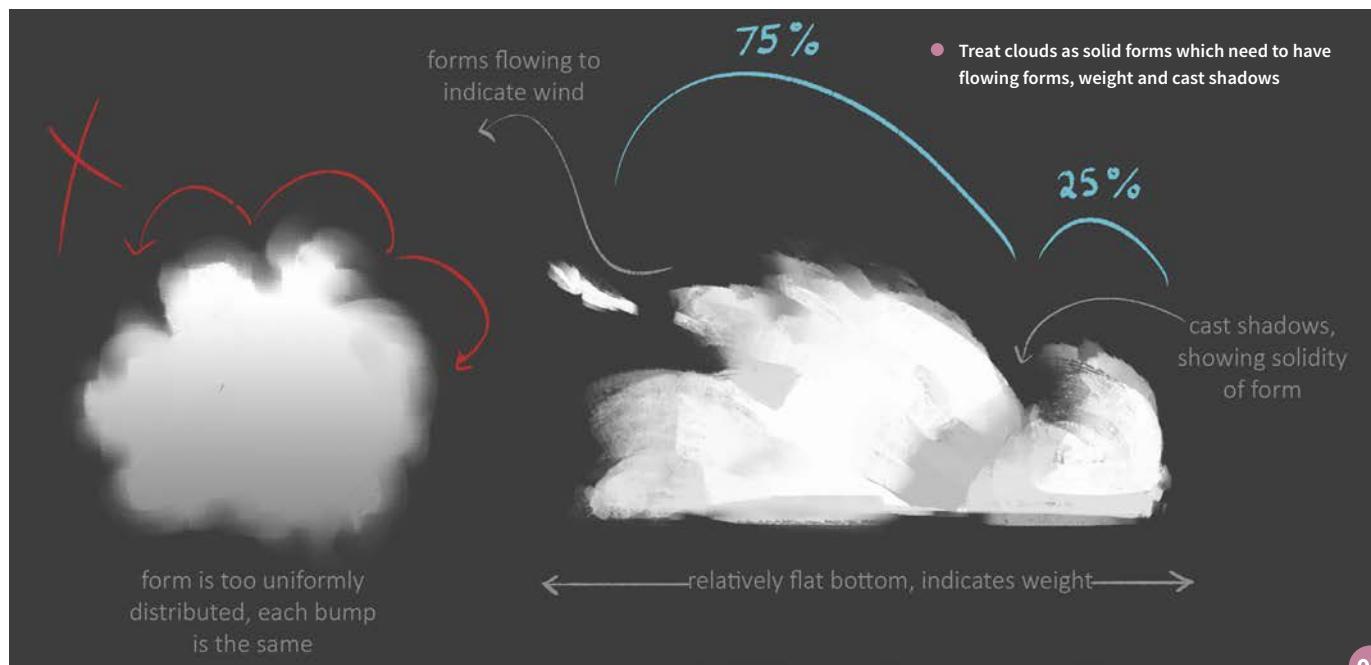
● Cathleen's setup of a laptop, Wacom tablet and pen, and a glare protection hood

01



● A huge storm cloud at about 5 or 6 pm somewhere in the middle of California is the reference for this piece

02



03



04

have a good view of the horizon and the sky. Find a shady spot to minimize screen glare, and make sure to choose somewhere comfortable that won't leave your legs numb after a few hours. For this particular tutorial, I will be using an interesting cloud that I saw on a road trip for reference. I wasn't able to stop in the middle of the road to paint, but I made sure to memorize the colors I saw and take plenty of photos.

03 Demystifying clouds: Clouds may seem like a challenge to paint, but they can also be one of the most fun things to paint if you understand them. The most important idea to keep in mind is that clouds appear to be solid forms. This means that the

same principles of form, color, and shading that you have for any solid object apply to them.

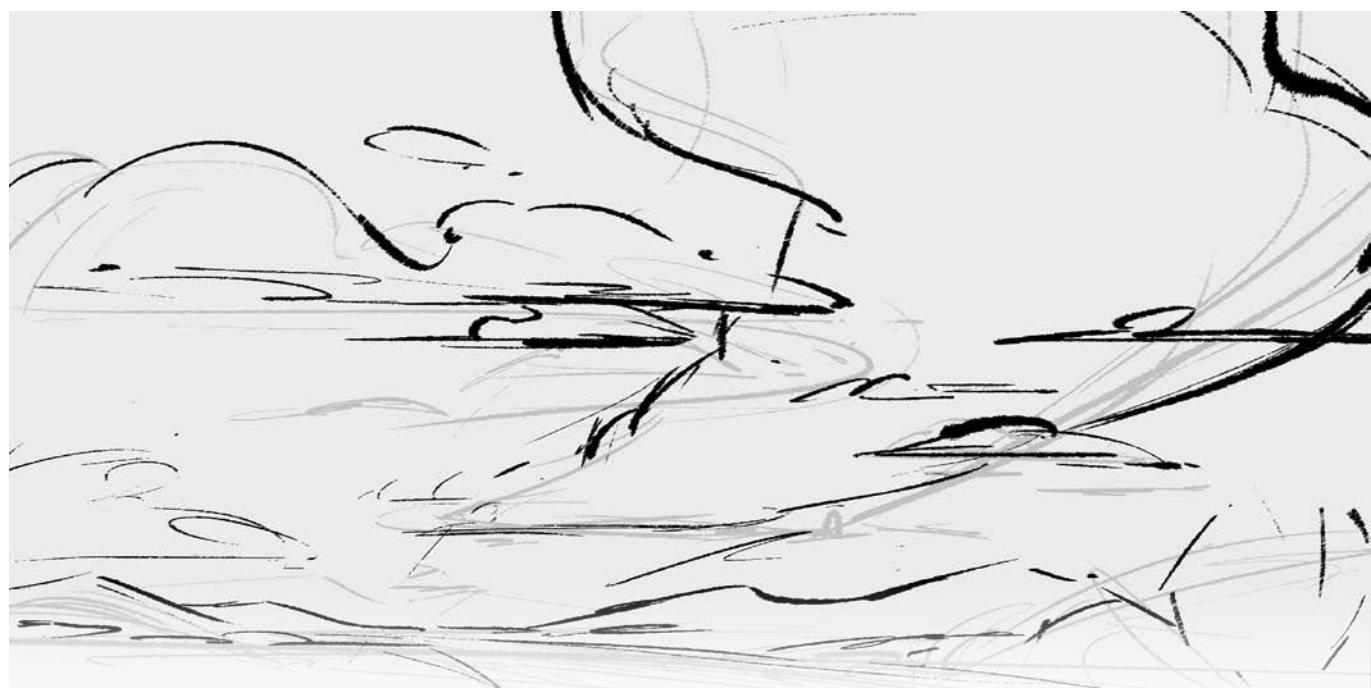
The first thing to keep in mind is shape. It can be easy to repeat the same sized bumps when painting a cloud, so try to make a conscious effort to make a variety of sizes of shapes. You can see in image 02 that the cloud on the right has a big bump (which makes up 75% of the cloud) next to a much smaller one (which makes up 25%). Together these differently sized shapes make up the whole length of the cloud.

Clouds also have a great deal of weight, so to convey this weight we will make the bottoms of the clouds much more flat. Clouds tend

to form at a specific height, and then get wispy towards the tops where wind may be blowing them, which will cause them to have flatter bottoms and fluffier tops.

Another important aspect of clouds is their solidity which will impact the way you render the shadows. I will discuss this in later steps, but make sure to study the cast shadows of clouds upon other clouds when you are in the field!

04 Reference photos: Because clouds are constantly moving, it can be impossible to paint the same exact cloud for more than a few minutes. It is important to take lots of reference images on your phone or camera for you to use. ▶



- A quick black and white composition sketch with a previous rough drawing underneath it

05



- Draw arrows representing where you want the eye to travel. When switching from line to value, some edits will improve the composition

06

Unfortunately, photos will alter perspective, color, and value, but they can be a great reference for cloud shapes, texture, and composition.

Since photos are not completely reflective of what you see in real life, it is vital that you accurately paint the colors and values while in the field. Here is a photo I took from a different location and time of day that better demonstrates the forms of clouds. I will be using this photo, in addition to my original photo, when I start rendering forms.

When taking photos of the sky with your phone, make sure you take several photos. In some of your photos tap to focus on the light areas, and in others focus on the dark areas. This way when you look at them later, you will be able to see the difference between the overexposed photos and the too-dark photos.

“Focus on creating depth by overlapping little cloud shapes over the huge cloud”

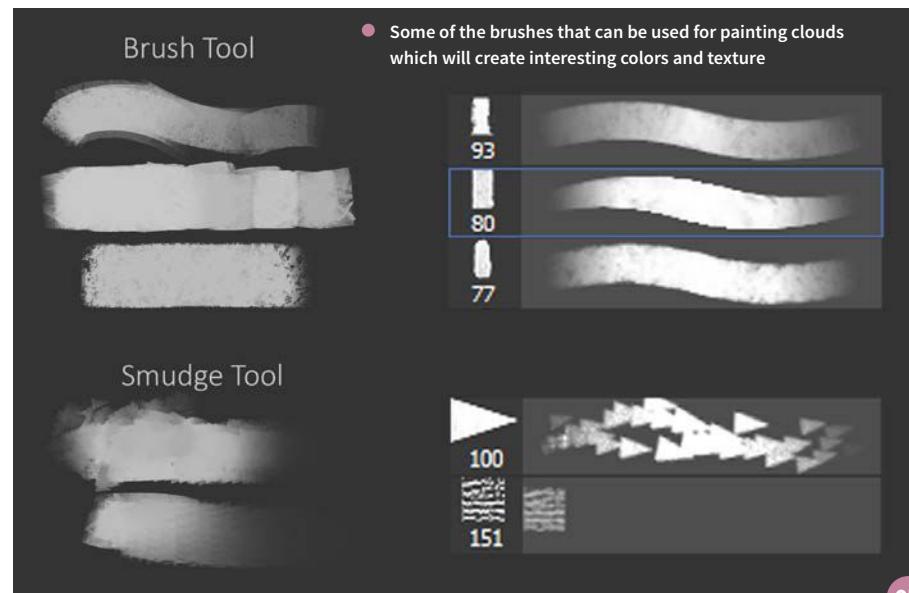
05 Composition sketch: To begin the plein air, we will do a gestural sketch that establishes the ground plane and general placement of shapes. In this step focus on creating depth by overlapping little cloud shapes over the huge cloud. These little clouds will get smaller as they go back in space, which will create a nice illusion of depth. Additionally the sketch should encourage your eye to move. I like to do variations of the sketch by lowering the opacity of the first sketch, and then redrawing

the sketch on a new layer. This can be repeated as necessary, and keeps your sketches loose and fast instead of drawing, erasing, and redrawing. Try to keep the eye moving in a circle around the composition by creating shapes that flow. Keep messing around with your composition until you feel that you have found an interesting rhythm, and don't be afraid to stylize, simplify, or even completely change what you see in the field!

06 **Value pass:** A good painting must read first in black and white. I always create a quick value block-in for plein air works by painting major shapes on separate layers. I chose to make the biggest cloud darker than the sky. I then make the foreground clouds darker still, because the biggest cloud is casting a shadow over them and they are closer to the camera.

It is important to maintain this value structure when you move on to color. An easy way to check this is to go to View > Proof Setup > Custom and select "Working Gray - Dot Grain 20%" under "Device to Simulate." Now when you press Ctrl+Y it will toggle to black and white, allowing you to check the values.

07 **A quick note on brushes:** When people paint clouds, there is a tendency to make them look too mushy, blurry, or smudgy. Clouds in reality are very solid shapes, with small



07

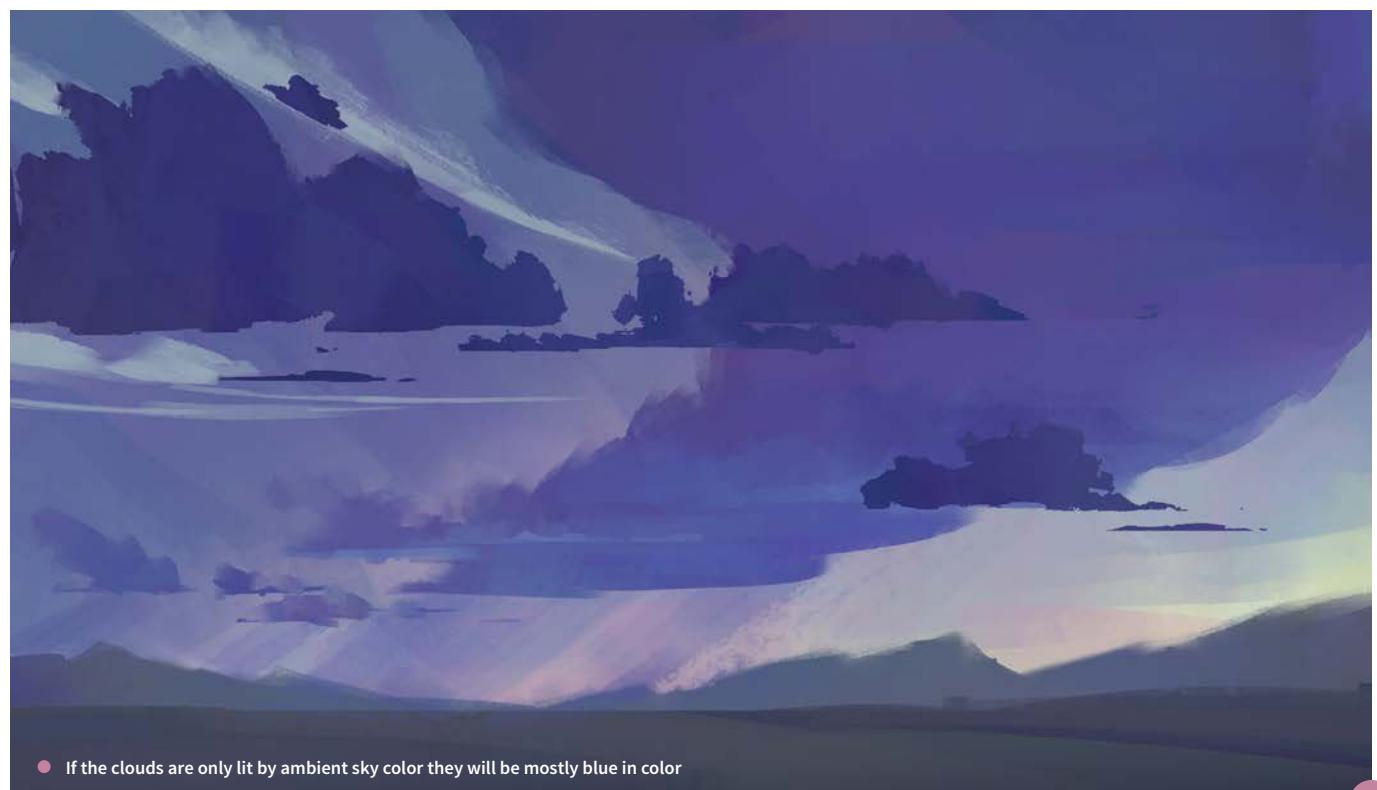
areas of smudging where wind may be blowing. For this reason, use solid brushes with a bit of texture to block-in shapes and lighting. Then use the Smudge tool only when necessary.

For the brushes, turn on a slight color jitter by going into Brush Settings, and turn on Color Dynamics and uncheck "Apply Per Tip." By slightly increasing the Hue and Saturation jitter, and keeping the Brightness jitter very low, you can get more interesting colors with each stroke. This is similar to how you may pick up random colors with a traditional paintbrush. For the Smudge

brush, use brushes that have a lot of scattering, so that when you smudge, it creates some texture.

"Paint the sky as a gradient from dark blue to a pink, and then yellowish or cyan where the sun is strongest"

08 **Blocking-in shadow:** In an environment painting, the main factor that will affect the colors is the sky gradient. The color of the sky will fill in all of the shadowed areas of the painting. Keeping ▶



08

● If the clouds are only lit by ambient sky color they will be mostly blue in color

this in mind will help to keep the colors of the painting unified. For this reason, I like to jump into color by establishing the sky colors first.

During a sunset, the sky turns a dark, rich blue or purple, and the reds and pinks come from light passing through clouds or atmosphere. Although the reference photo is a bit washed out because of the strong sunlight hitting the clouds, paint the sky as a gradient from dark blue to a pink, and then yellowish or cyan where the sun is strongest. For the clouds, select the darkest color in the sky gradient, shift it more towards purple, saturate it, and darken it (making sure the value matches the grayscale composition). Once you have done this for all of the clouds, we will move on to the light shapes.

09 **Rendering the forms:** To keep you from rushing into detail too quickly, block-in the light shapes using clipping masks. Clip a new layer to each individual cloud shape by holding down Alt, hovering between the two layers until a little arrow appears, and then clicking. This ensures that anything you paint on the new layer will be locked to the one below it.

To paint the light shapes start with a medium-light color that you can see; in this case, it is a slightly desaturated purplish-pink. I like to paint shapes that I find appealing, and then cut back into those shapes with the Eraser. The nice thing about clipping masks is that they allow you to focus on the light shape without affecting the color underneath.

Another thing to note is the presence of bounce light and sub-surface scattering in the cloud. The cloud is a solid form, but since it is made of water vapor, light can still pass through it and bounce around, creating a variety of colors. Make the underside of the biggest cloud more cyan to imitate the light bouncing from the ground into the cloud. Also give the cloud a small amount of rim light towards the left side and make the sky more yellow to harmonize with the warm tones of the clouds.

10 **Finishing touches:** Once the light and shadow shapes have been established, merge the layers to work more efficiently and emulate more closely traditional painting. For a while, I will still keep the clouds on different layers, but I merge the light shape onto its respective cloud layer. Do not forget

to check the grayscale version of your image after you have done some rendering to make sure your values still work. When you are happy with the values make a merged copy of the image and completely paint on top!

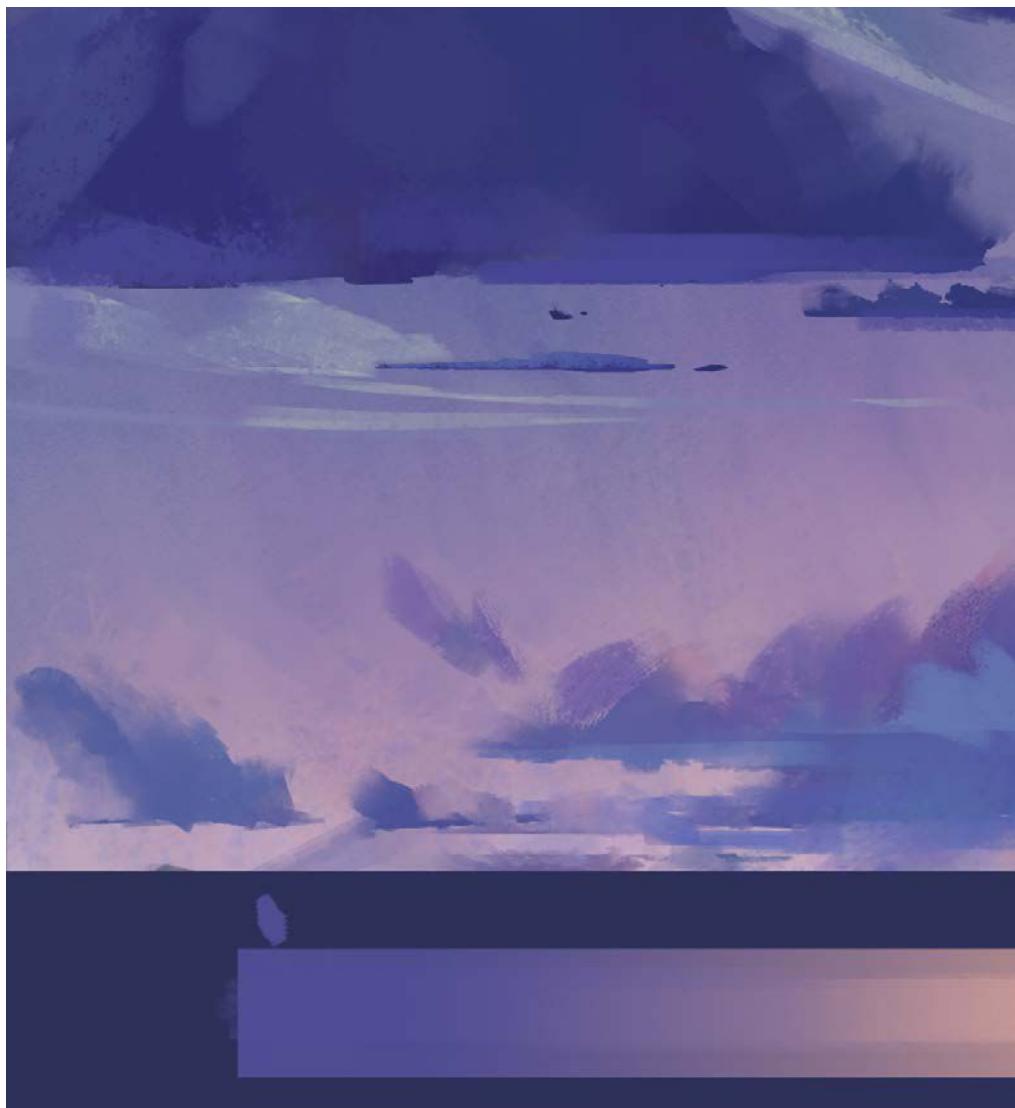
It is important, during this step, to not blend the colors into mud. To prevent this from happening, think about transition colors. For example, instead of having a smooth gradient

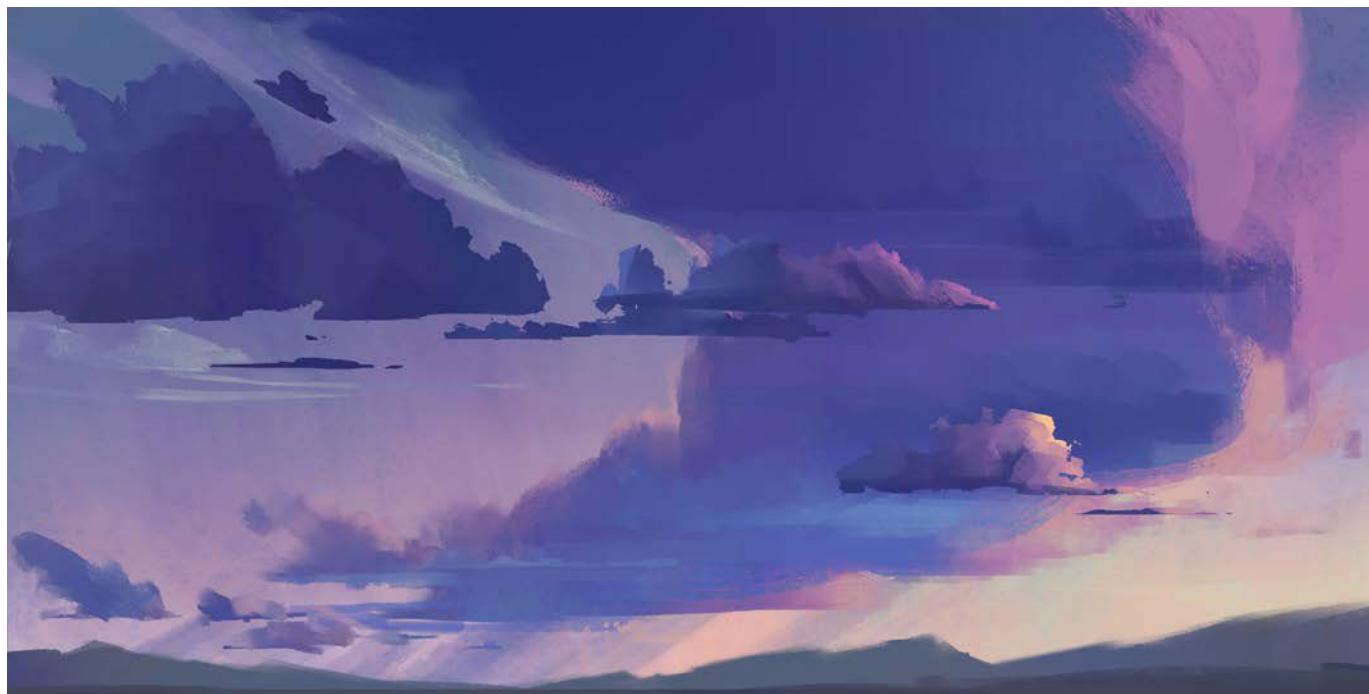
from the blue shadow to the yellow highlight, try to paint mid-transition colors in solid strokes. This will help to keep the painterly essence of a plein air, and is also more visually interesting. It also helps viewers read plane changes better, rather than look at a smooth, airbrush-like mess. Using the Smudge and Brush tools as mentioned in step 07, blend some of the very hard edges while still maintaining the original light shape. The sunset study is now complete! ●

PRO TIPS

The benefits of plein air

I learned almost everything I know about light and color from plein air painting and studying different lighting scenarios. Even if you live in an urban area and you think the skies are generally similar, you would be surprised to see how much lighting can change simply based on the atmosphere and weather! Knowing which colors and values to use in a large amount of lighting scenarios will greatly benefit your illustration, and make your paintings feel more grounded in reality.





- The clouds now have basic light shapes painted onto them to indicate bounce and rim light

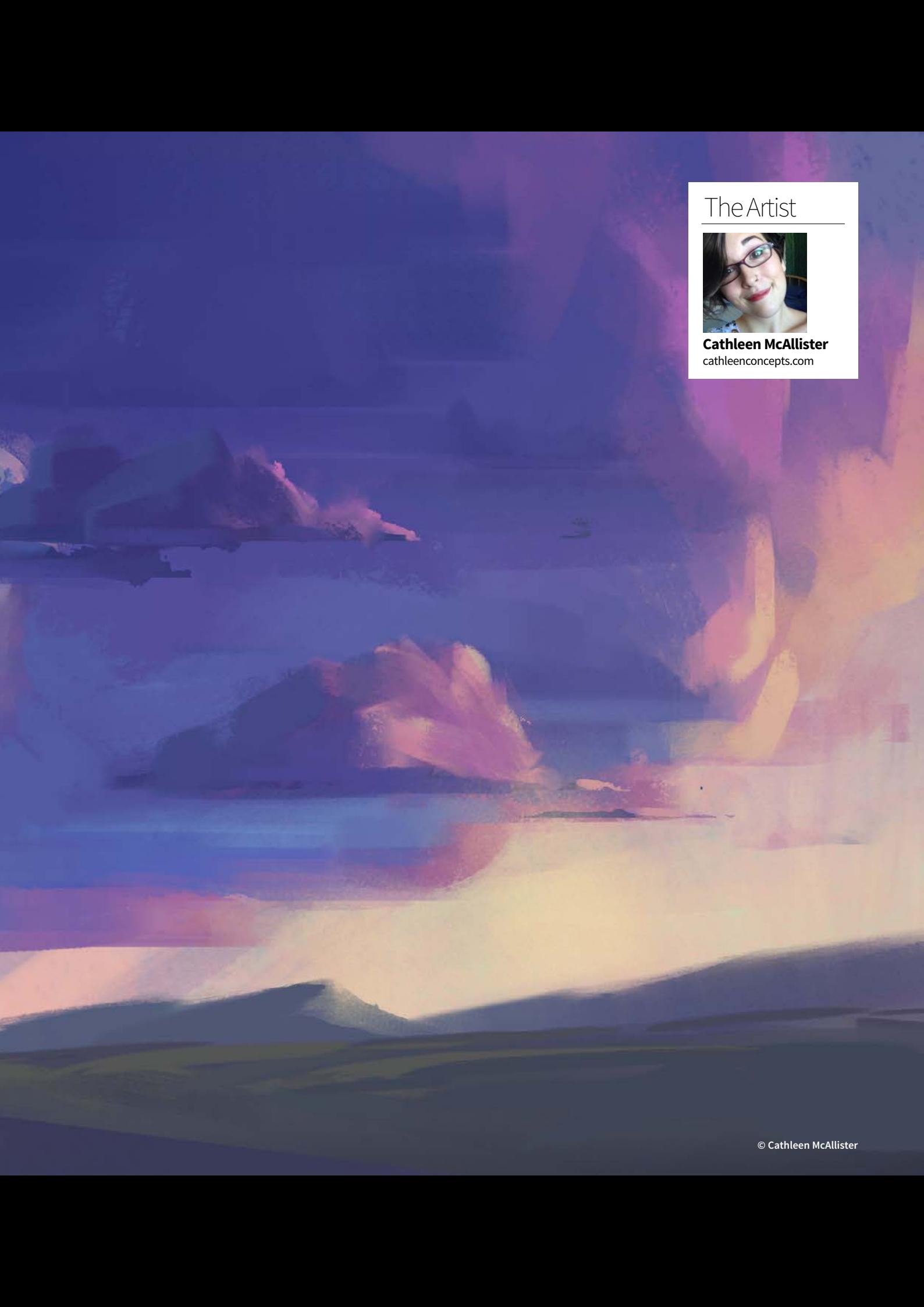
09



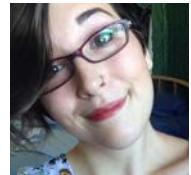
10

111





The Artist



Cathleen McAllister
cathleenconcepts.com



The Artist



Juan Novelletto
novelletto.com.ar

Software Used:
Photoshop

Juan Novelletto is a concept artist and illustrator from Buenos Aires, Argentina. He works at NGD Studios, developing the Master of Orion reboot and is also Art Director at indie game studio Nastycloud.

Re-imagine the fall of Icarus

Discover how you can create striking images by taking a fresh approach with familiar legends ➤

Learn to use masks, transform tools and blur effects to save time...

With security I can say that the majority of people know the Greek myth of Icarus. If not, I'll summarize it in a few words: Daedalus, father of Icarus, manufactures for himself and his son artificial wings made of feathers and wax to escape from the island of Crete. Daedalus warns Icarus not to fly too high, because the sun could burn the wings, nor too low because he may fall into the sea. Icarus does not listen and flies higher each time until his wings are destroyed by the sun. As a result, Icarus falls to the sea and dies.

In this tutorial we are going to rethink this myth and set it in a new context with an illustration painted entirely in Photoshop. We will start with some ideas in the form of thumbnails, without worrying so much about aesthetics. Then, choosing one of these thumbnails, we will refine the idea until we have a neat line drawing to paint. We will also explore values to play with light and help focus the composition to where we want the attention of the viewer. With some textures we will aim to quickly and realistically create an environment. Finally, with various tricks and effects we will give the final touches to the image, so it gains dynamism and drama. So, let's begin!

01 Sketching three ideas:

Whenever I have to start an illustration or a concept, I start sketching some ideas in the form of thumbnails. These are small illustrations that give you a fast idea for an image, focusing only on exploring ideas and not creating something finished. In this case I start in grayscale, painting three options.

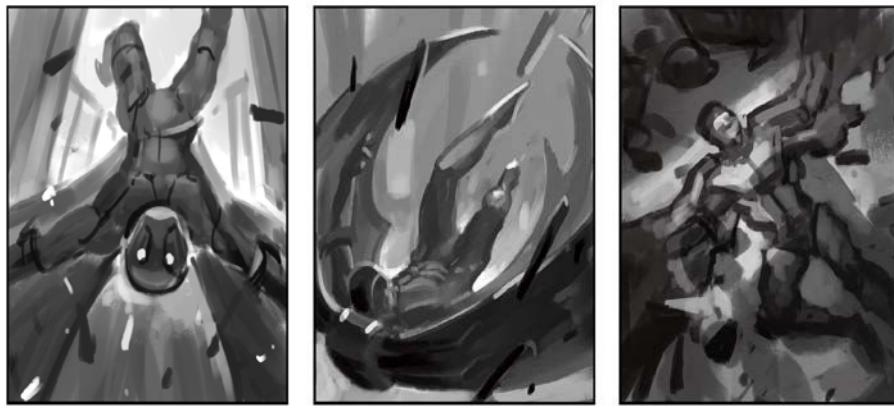
In the first thumbnail I try to be dynamic, and play with the idea of Icarus looking at the viewer. In the second option I move to something more classic showing Icarus falling with his back in view. In the third option I show Icarus already fallen, but place the camera fully overhead. I choose the third option because I like the idea that the viewer will be in the position of a God, observing Icarus

from a height, and possibly giving the idea that the viewer is the one who brought Icarus down.

02 Initial line art:

I choose the thumbnail I'm going to work with, the third option. So I scale it to the final size that I want the final image to be. In this case I will need a very large image, about 4,000 pixels in width and a resolution of 300 dpi.

By scaling the image it will have a high quality from the beginning and I will not have to redo anything in the future because of the low resolution. On the scaled thumbnail I lower the opacity by 50% so the image is barely visible. I choose a hard brush, and quickly start to define the lines, without



● Three options drawn quickly, focusing exclusively on generating ideas

01



THUMBNAIL



OPACITY 50%



ROUGH LINE OVER THE THUMBNAIL

● Rough lines drawn over the original thumbnail focusing on the proportions of the character

02



ROUGH LINES



OPACITY 50% AND MORE CANVAS



NEW LINES, WITH NEW ELEMENTS

- Repeat the same process as step 02 a number of times until you obtain a well defined line

03

being very neat. Focus on the proportions and elements that make up the scene.

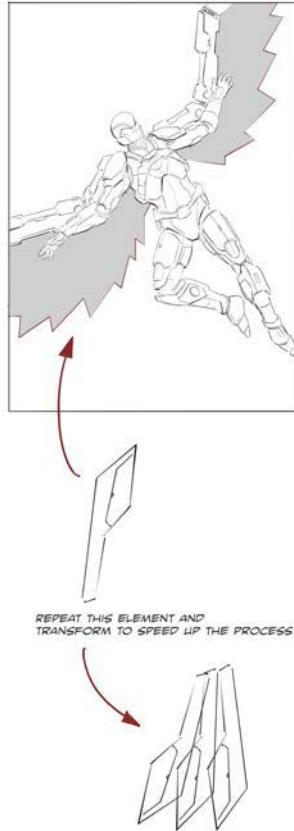
“Uncertainty is a very good thing in an illustration because it leaves the viewer with a lot of questions”

03 **New elements and line art:** To improve the line art I repeat almost the same process as in the previous step. To the first sloppy lines, I lower the opacity and put them on a white background. I also add a little more canvas, to give me a margin to play with a possible reframing.

Now it is time to choose the idea. Even though there is nothing concrete, the idea of a sci-fi Icarus is tempting. Icarus was brought down by challenging the Greek gods, as he was a simple human trying to reach the sun.

Why not think of Icarus is a simple human, trying to challenge to machines with robotic wings? Uncertainty is a very good thing in an illustration because it leaves the viewer with a lot of questions.

With this in mind, start now to define with lines the design of the costume and the character as a whole, still working in a sloppy way. For the design I mix sci-fi themes with a superhero costume, since superheroes are a kind of modern myth.



- Choose an element and repeat it to save time and keep the image tidy

04

04 Final line art: With the line sketches from the previous step, we repeat the process again, drawing the final line art neatly, and with almost all of the elements that the final image will have. This process has the advantage of allowing us to concentrate on improving the painting and the rendering because the idea

becomes more refined. Another option could be working from stains (abstract blots which can be used as a starting point for developing forms), and I recommend this method when you have no idea of what you want to do. Every process is unique, but you have to choose one that will feel comfortable and is



LINE ART

AMBIENT OCCLUSION

VALUES

POINT LIGHT AND SHADOWS

best for the image. Wings are the last addition to the line art. To accelerate this process I draw a single element and then repeat it to create full wings. Use the transform tools to locate the individual elements on the wings.

05 Lights and shadows: Once the line art is ready, proceed to give the image volume, working in grayscale. A detailed and realistic way to do this is to imagine you have to render passes of a 3D program. But in this case we are painting them.

The first thing I do is make a layer of ambient occlusion which create the shadows produced by ambient light. I paint these shadows with a soft brush creating shadows similar to those on a cloudy day, and add a Multiply blend mode to them (always keeping the line art layer above). Then I separate the figure from the background in two values, with a plain color, because each material has its own value.

Finally add two further layers. The first layer is for projected shadows and the second layer is for the lights which will project the shadows. Different shadows will be projected according to where the light is placed, and we can also suggest elements just using shadows. Light can also be used to guide the human eye, which is why I am only going to illuminate the part that interests me most.

06 Color palette: We now return to the lines, and deactivate the layers from the previous step. In this step we will concentrate only on the color palette. Define some complementary color palettes which always work and use them to populate different ▶



● All the layers together form the volumes of the image

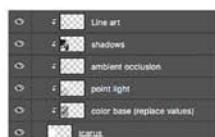
05



COLOR PALETTE

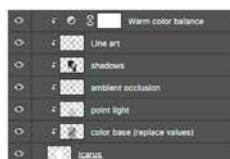
● Separate colors in squares aside from your canvas to maintain a consistent palette

06

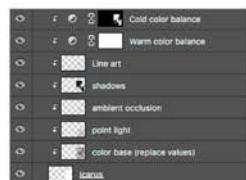


#1

- Color Balance adjustment layers can dramatically change the color of your image



#2



#3

parts of Icarus's costume, and the background. In this way we are defining the materials.

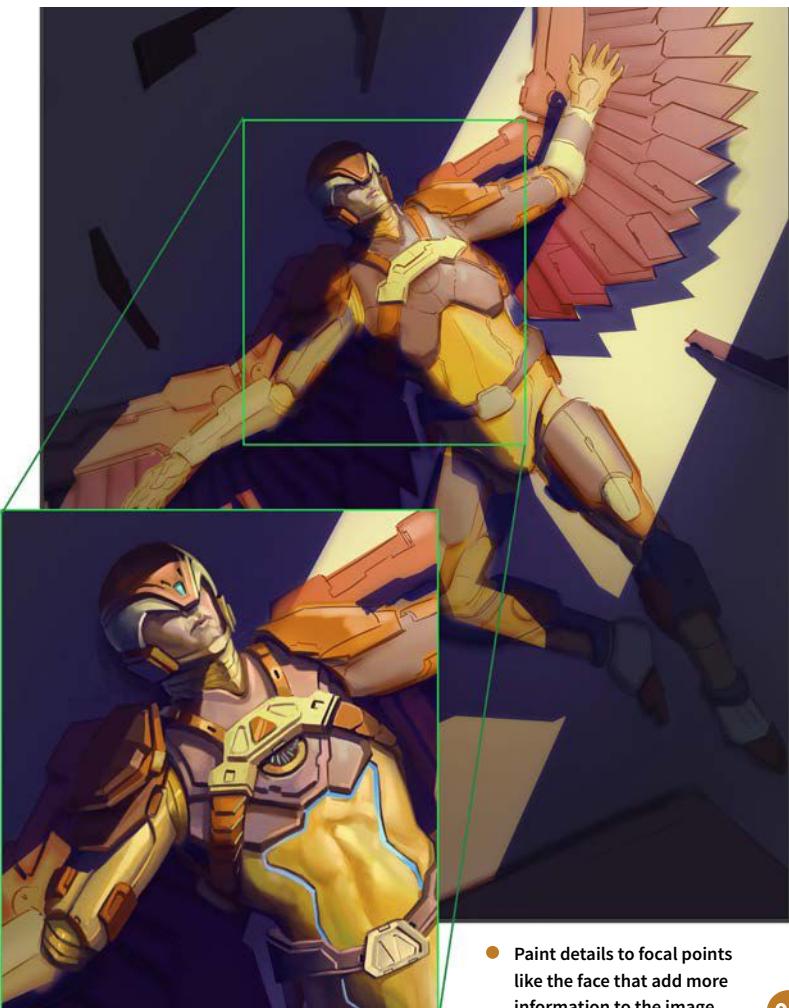
You always have to think about the balance of colors, and a way to do this is through the proportion of brightness between colors. For example, use the brightest colors the least and the duller colors in greater quantities.

07 Combine color with values:

Combine the two previous steps to show the image with color and values. To do this, replace the values layer from step 05 with the color layer from step 06. Then, add a Color Balance adjustment layer over the image. I choose warm colors, since these will be visible in the illuminated areas.

Add a new Color Balance layer, this time using cold colors. To this layer generate a mask selecting the shadows, so only these are affected, and a contrast between cold and warm colors is generated. With that, we are ready to start to polish the image.

08 Detailing with paint: Now comes the slower part of the process which is to begin to detail the image. I start to paint the part which has the most importance in the



- Paint details to focal points like the face that add more information to the image

07

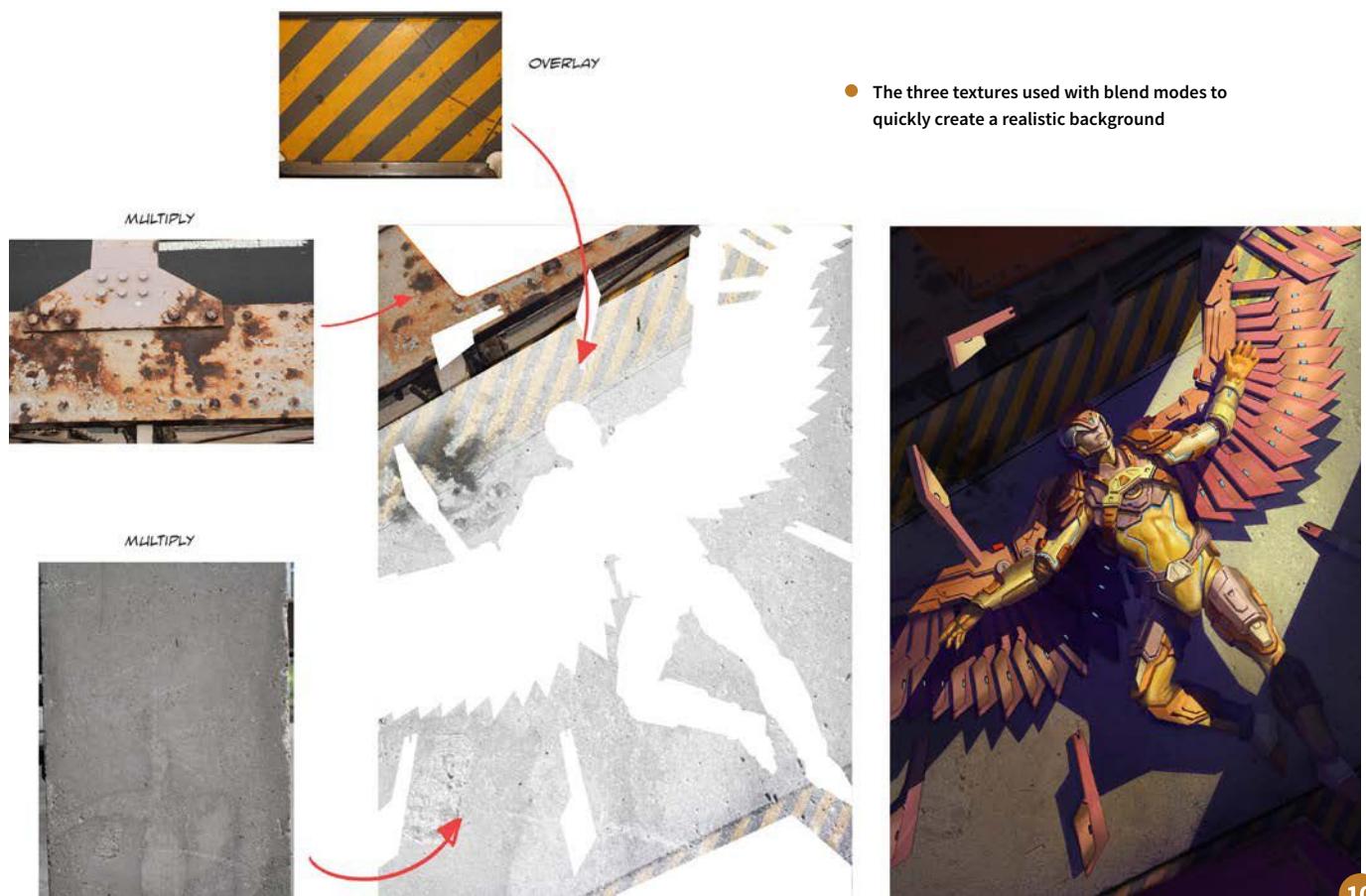
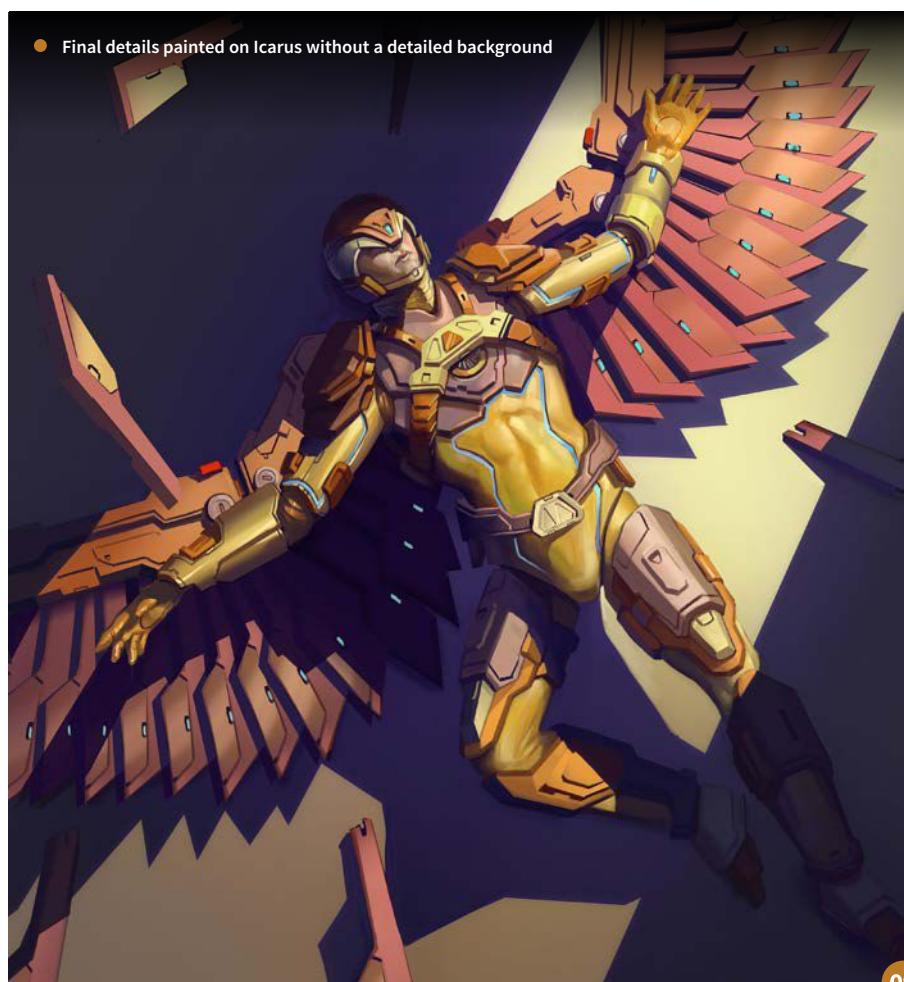
08

image which is the illuminated area of the face and the body. I add more detail, since this is going to be the focal point. Do not play with rebound lights yet, but simply paint volumes in the shaded and illuminated areas.

Continue this process, repeating it throughout the image. However, always focus on the areas that are of importance to the scene and are visible in the light.

09 Paint final details: Keep on painting all the areas that are lacking detail, but always concentrate on the focal points. In this step we will do the same thing we did in step 03 with the wings: paint something and repeat it, then position them with transform tools. For now you do not need to change the colors, since we will do this in a later step. Once this process of painting details is finished, we are going to focus on the background and add textures.

10 Adding photo textures: Now concentrate on the background, since it is still without detail. I will use photo textures to give realism and quickly cover this stage of the illustration. Be careful not to use too many, since the background is not complex. For my references ▶



I use the site <http://freetextures.3dtotal.com> where you can find a lot of free textures.

Cut out the silhouette of Icarus and separate it from the background so the textures do not affect it. Then paste a concrete texture on the floor and select Multiply, lowering the opacity. With this you get detail and realism quickly.

Do the same thing with two more textures, and generate certain random forms that suggest details hidden in the dark. This is something that you can do as much as you want, since it is fun to combine photos and build details and new forms.

“Paint smoke with a soft brush on both wings, this reinforces the idea that Icarus has been brought down”

11 **FX and secondary lights:** We now have an almost finished image and are at the most fun part of the process; adding FX. In this case we will add fire, smoke, and sparks to the image. The first thing to do is to paint smoke with a soft brush on both wings, this reinforces the idea that Icarus has been brought down. As the smoke is generated by fire we need to paint a bit of fire at the base of the smoke. Do this with a soft brush in Overlay to light that area slightly.

Finally, add a few small sparks in a Color Dodge layer. All these effects are secondary light sources, so I paint some rebounds on to Icarus's armor. You can also use this method to add effects in areas that you want to illuminate.

12 **Final retouches:** It is time to conclude the image. The first thing I do is reframe the image by cutting margins to put greater importance on Icarus. Then add some more fire and particle effects to give it a greater visual impact. Finally, duplicate the whole image and add a Radial Blur that will give dynamism.

So now we are finished with Icarus. I hope that this tutorial has been useful for you, and now the big question looming over our illustration is “Who shot down our modern Icarus?” I will leave that to you! ●



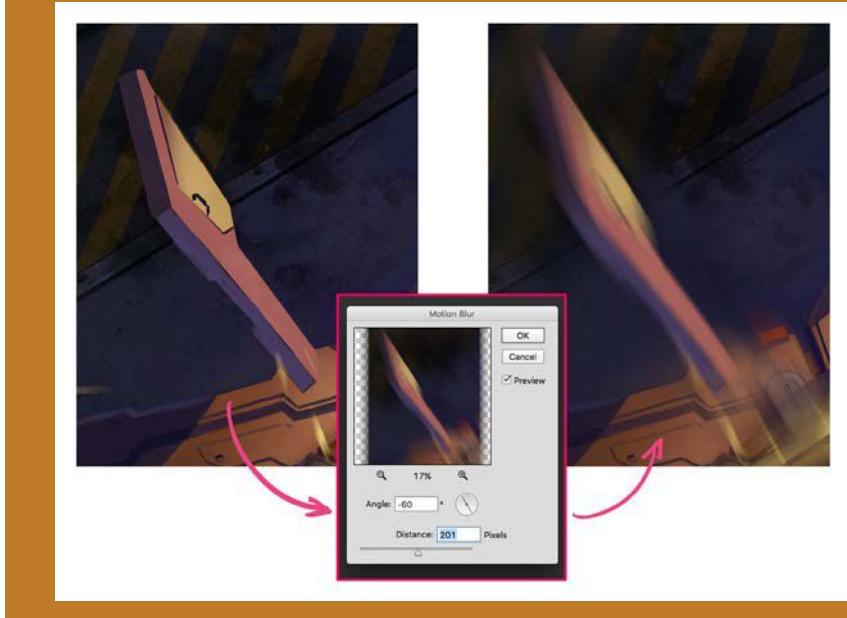
● Paint smoke with a soft brush on both wings

11

PRO TIPS

Motion Blur to generate dynamism

With Motion Blur you can quickly create dynamism in an image. In this case I cut pieces of the image and apply the Motion Blur in the direction that I want, so it gives the sensation that it is moving. For elements in the foreground you can also use this to give realism.





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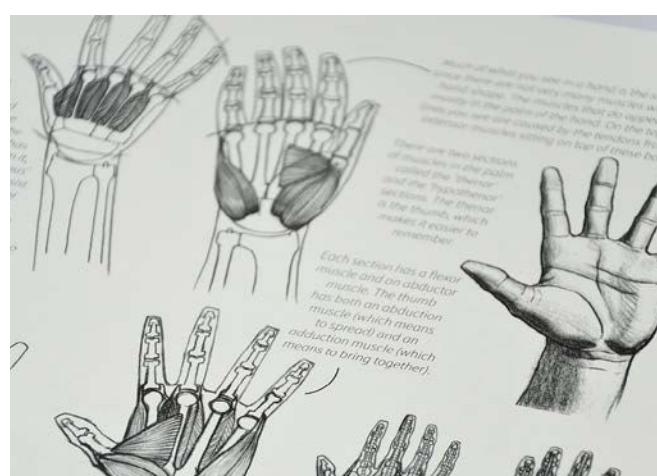
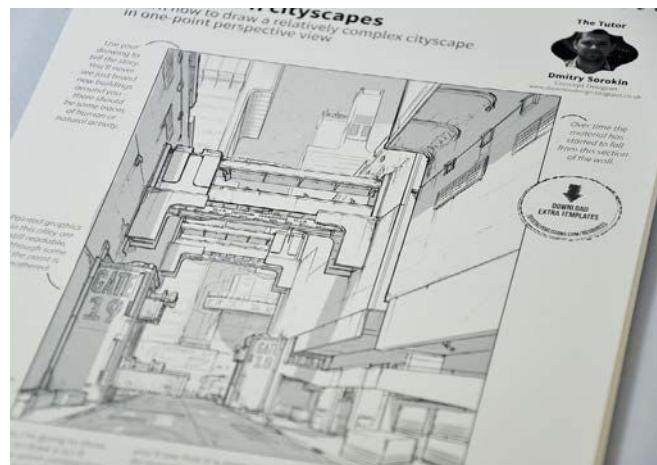
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Developing animation style environments

Lorenzo Lanfranconi shows how he developed an animation style tropical environment using limited brushes and texture effects ▶

All images © Lorenzo Lanfranconi



The Artist



Lorenzo Lanfranconi
facebook.com/RENDIHSART

Software Used:
Photoshop

Lorenzo Lanfranconi is a 2D artist from Italy. He is currently working on some editorial projects including *ALPHA beta test*, a personal art book based on an environmental journey.

Pick up tips on how to quickly create atmospheric depth and add texture...

In this article I will show you how I created a complete environment using just a single brush. By avoiding the use of many different textured brushes, I had a more uniform and personal work. In my works I often change technique because I'm always trying to find a better solution to render realistic things with fewer brushstrokes, but I found in this brush the perfect basic instrument for my methods.

For my series *ALPHA beta test* I usually start to work by thinking about the sensation I need to instill in the image. In this case I imagined being lost somewhere in the ocean on a

primordial island enclosed only by the sound of wild nature. I started sketching with this in mind and when I found the right colors to give life to the sensations I could finally start working, feeling highly inspired. For me this is the key to enjoying my work and to giving life to the final drawing. Remember that the most important thing in an illustration is that it has to transmit something to the observer.

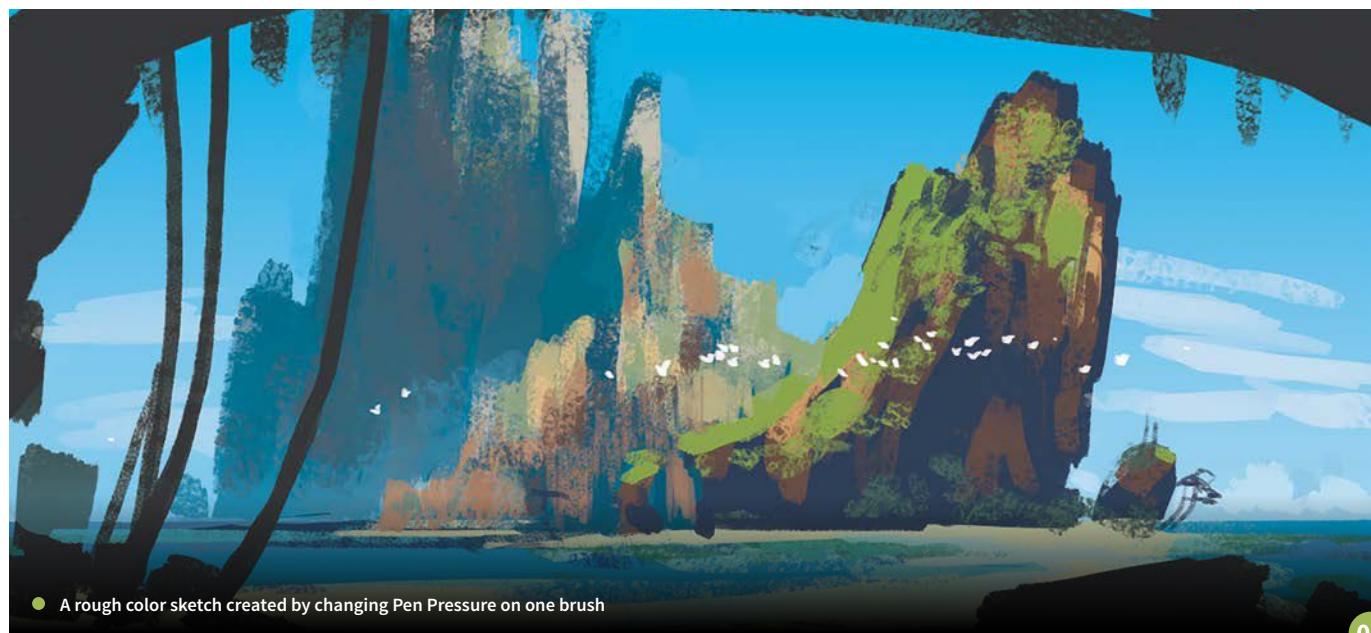
the sensation of being in the environment, walking from the foreground to the background. I chose a few key colors and always kept the brush opacity at 100%. I never touch the opacity, as it is better to calibrate using the Pen Pressure from the brush panel options which creates a more carved design.

When I had some sketches, I chose the one which felt better, asking some friends which was the best one. It is always good to share your work with someone external who can give you some fresh advice.

01 **Rough color sketching:** I started sketching quick compositions remembering that it was only a sketch, so I did not lose time on it. I was impulsive, and put down colors with rough brushstrokes.

A perspective grid helped me to bring the observer's eyes into the composition giving

02 **Tonal sketching:** Now I had to transform the color concept into something more concrete. I applied an 80% white Levels adjustment and, with a third



01



02

layer on the top, start sketching my final idea for the illustration. I did not want to make a nice drawing because I would do this later with colors. This sketch was like a second concept based on the first one.

I used gray tones to start studying the depth and often flipped the canvas horizontally to adjust the elements and calculate the correct weight of the composition. You can also, if you want, study the light using two gray tones for each element. In this case I did not do it because it was more or less mid-day in the illustration and there were no particular light effects.

“To give atmospheric depth I used gradient layers, with a cyan color, to distance the background elements”

03 **Giving life to the idea:** I then rebuilt the tonal sketch using the colors from the first one. Remember to create a layer for each element you think is convenient; you can merge them later if you think there are too many. Always give a name to your layers so you will not lose time finding the right one in your panel.

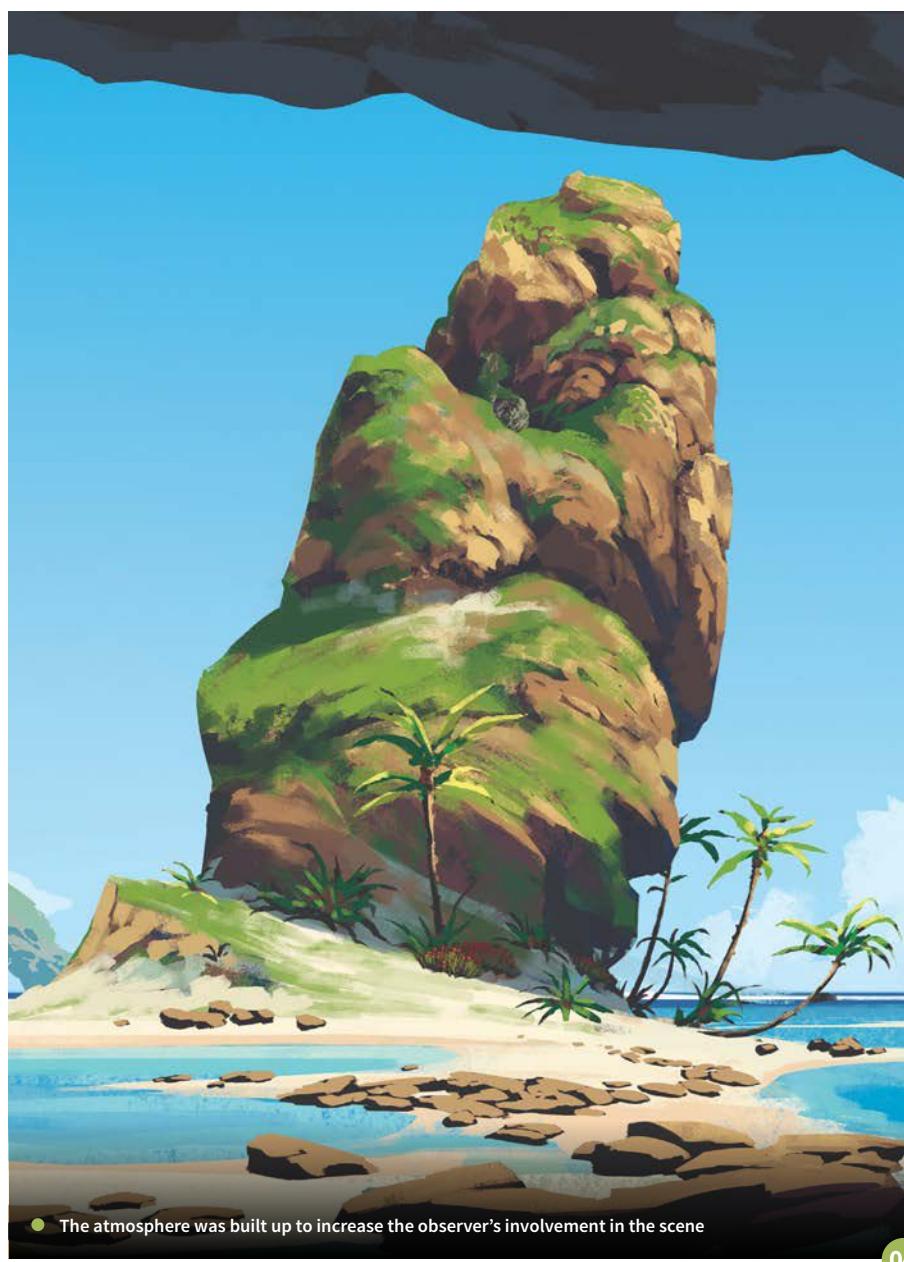
In this step I had to return mentally to the first one. After I had created silhouettes of the elements, and blocked the layers, with rough brush strokes I started studying the light and atmosphere. To give atmospheric depth I used gradient layers, with a cyan color, to distance the background elements. You could give the different layers colors which helps a lot if you have many different elements.

04 **Developing the scene:** I still did not worry about the textures, for me this step was only a transition from the previous step to the next. I spent my time studying the lights and the atmosphere. You could also add or clear some elements to adjust the composition. In this case I added some rocks on the beach to increase the sense of involvement with the environment and I erased a peak to give more space in the background.

To help me create the right atmosphere I imagined part of the scene so I could feel sensations like the warm sunlight or the damp forest. I was a pirate searching treasure and needing to explore the island ▶



03



04

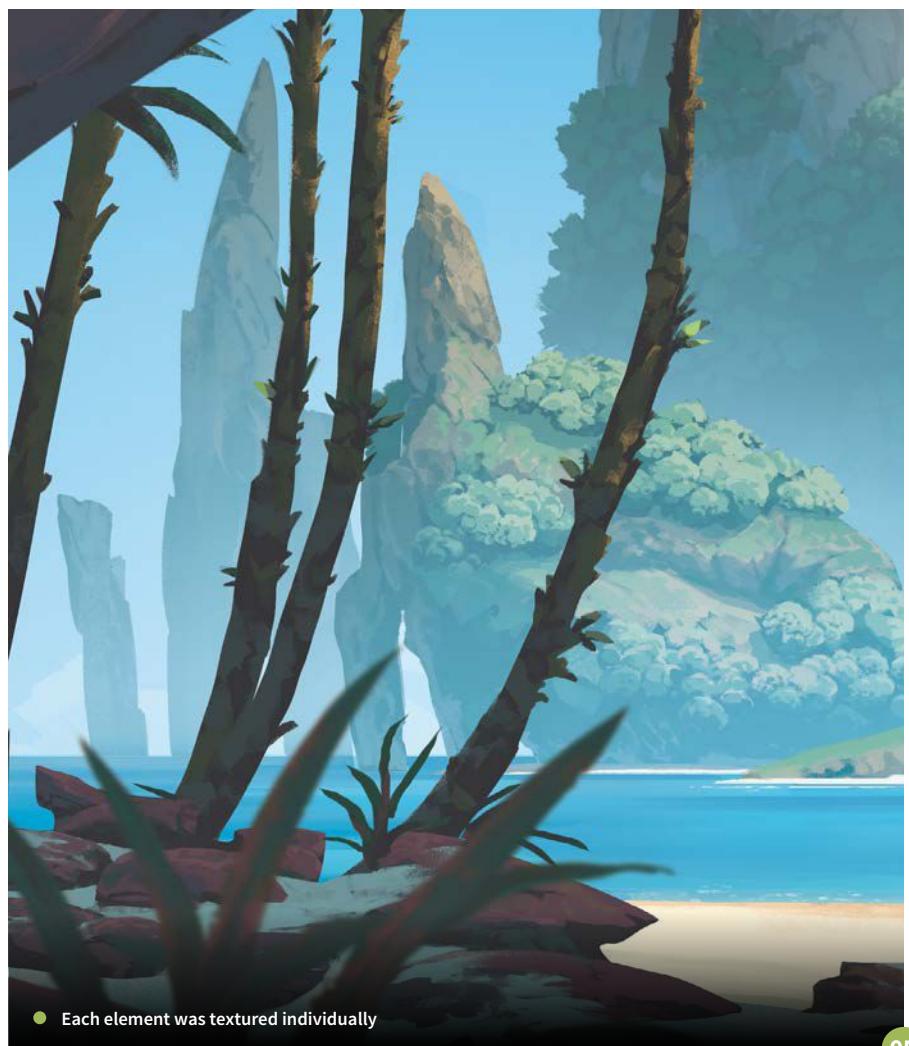
through the illustration. Bringing out my fantasy helped me to tell the story.

05 Texture time: This step was perhaps the longest but it was also essential to the work. I had to render every single material (rocks, plants, water, and so on). Remember that there is not a “fixed code” for each element so you have to meditate on the effect you want to give and try to render it with your brush. If you can't make something don't give up, just remember that if someone else can do it, you can too.

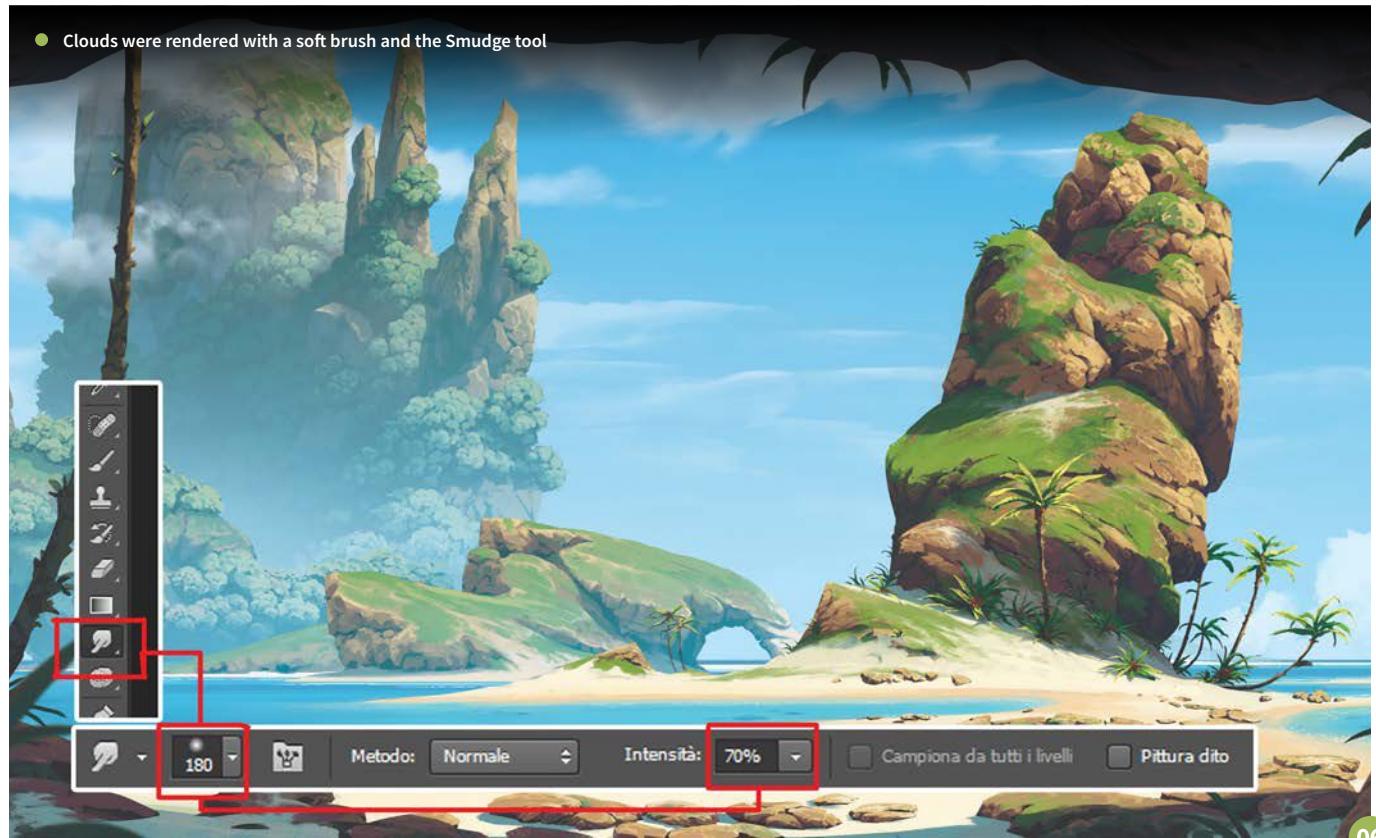
I searched photographic references to see how light reflects on different elements and tried to recreate it. To make realistic textures you don't have to make thousands of strokes searching for the smallest details, remember that you only need to find a few essential strokes.

06 Giving depth to the sky: Generally I leave this step to the last part of my process because I love clouds and

“Gaussian Blur and Motion Blur from the Filters menu are interesting Photoshop effects to mix with brushes when rendering clouds”



05



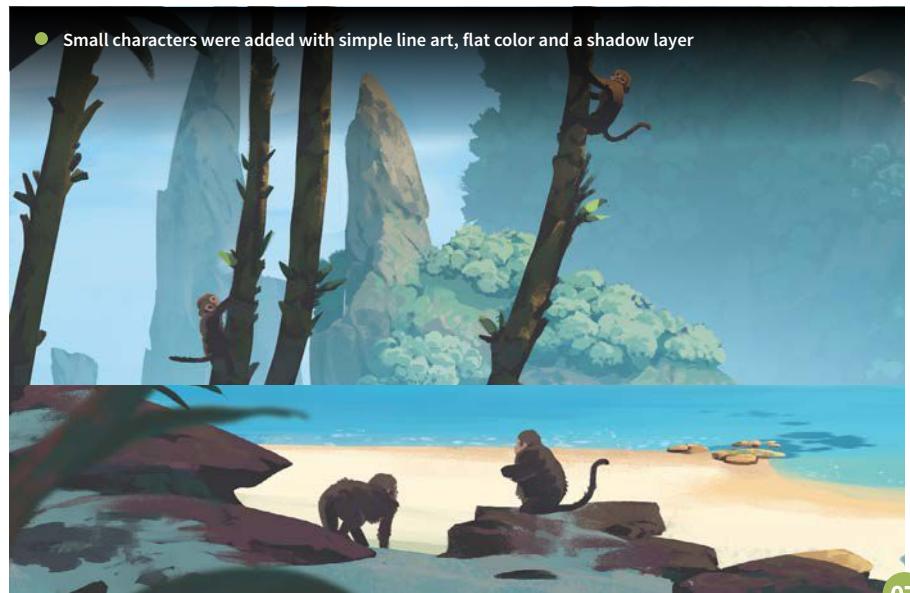
06

because finishing the sky and adding characters means that all the other elements are completed. Obviously if the sky is the subject you have to work on it earlier. For the clouds I employed the same brush that I used for the other elements. I started painting some strokes and then mixed and blurred them with the Smudge tool (see image 06) with a basic soft brush with 70% opacity.

There are many different clouds and as they are gassy elements you can serenely work them with different brushes if you prefer. Gaussian Blur and Motion Blur from the Filters menu are interesting Photoshop effects to mix with brushes when rendering clouds.

07 **Adding characters:** Finally I could work on the characters. I added them in at the end so I could work on the entire illustration as if it were an animation background. In this case there were only some little monkeys in the foreground and birds in the center to add. They were really small so I worked them differently from my usual stuff.

Usually if I have bigger characters I like to render them realistically but with an animation



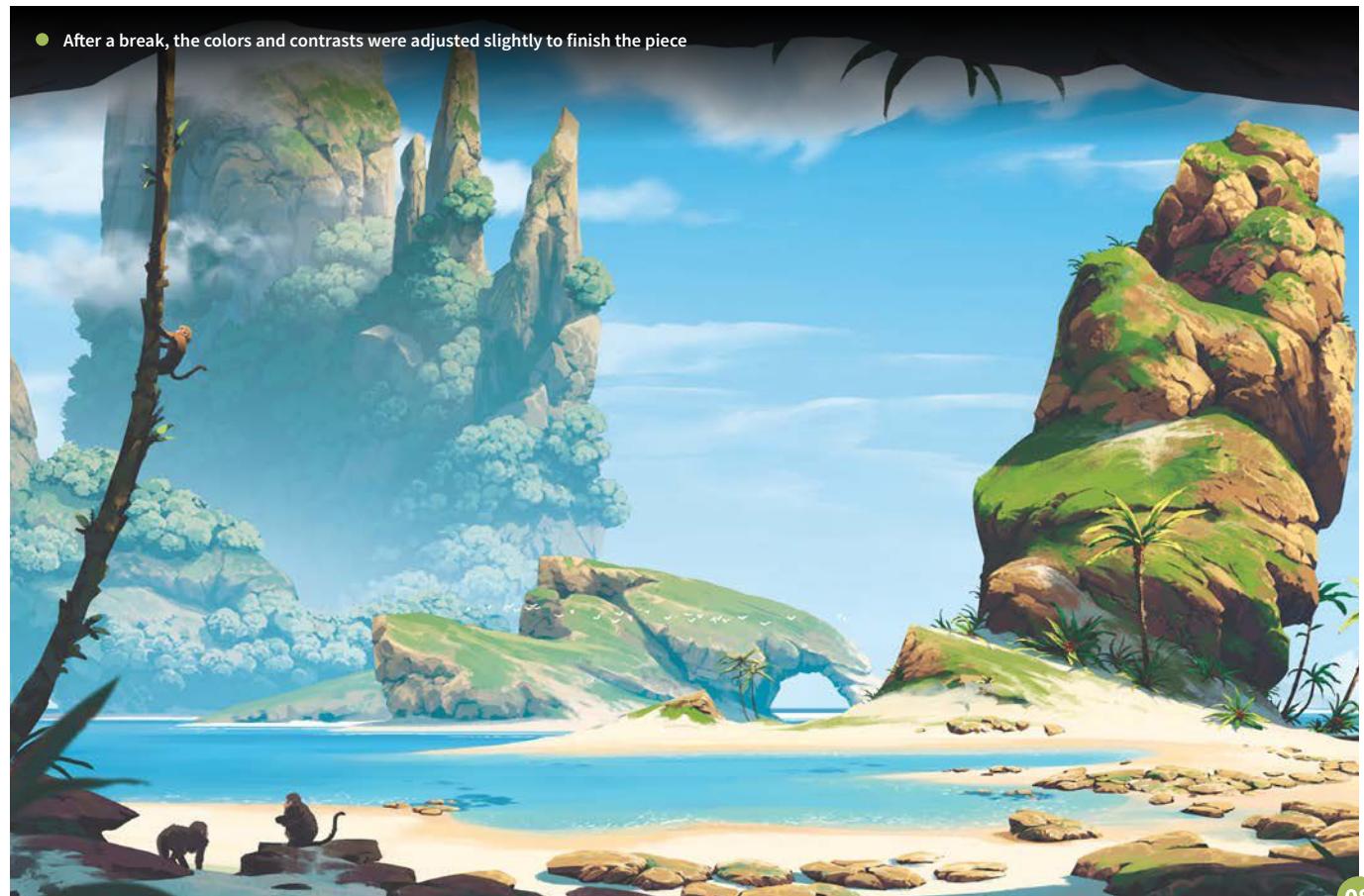
07

style image I used thin line art filled with flat colors and just a shadow layer. This helped me a lot to detach the characters from the environment and to give my work a style similar to an animated film screenshot.

08 **Final adjustments:** Now my work was almost done! When you get to this point of the process in your own work I suggest that you close your work and relax

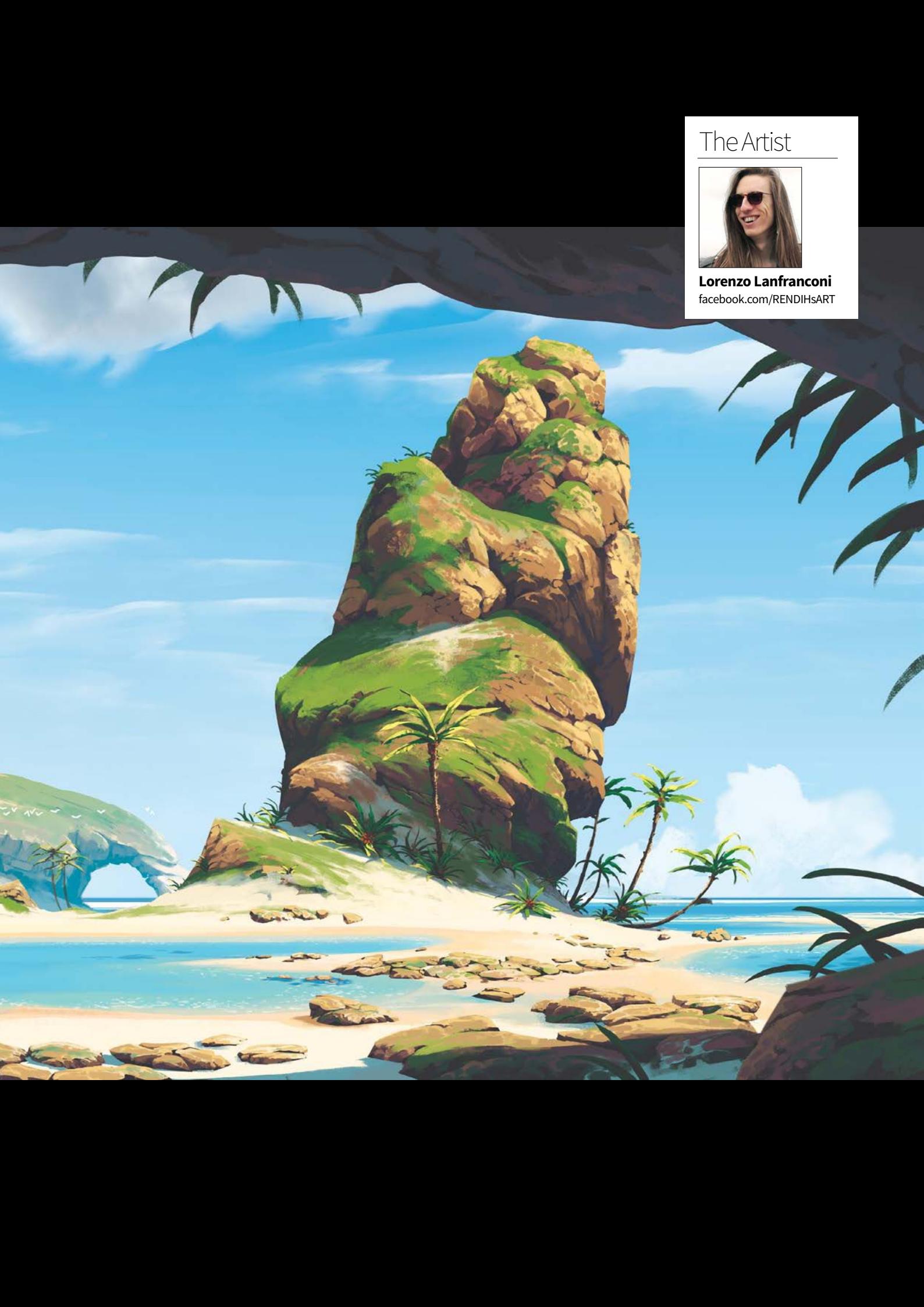
your eyes for a little while. Then, open them again and with some adjustment layers, regulate the Curves, saturation and colors.

In this work I increased the contrast a little and balanced more of the colors in the light, mid-tones and shadows to accentuate the warm sunlight. I suggest that you add a layer mask for these adjustments so you can easily modify every single control in each moment. ●



08





The Artist



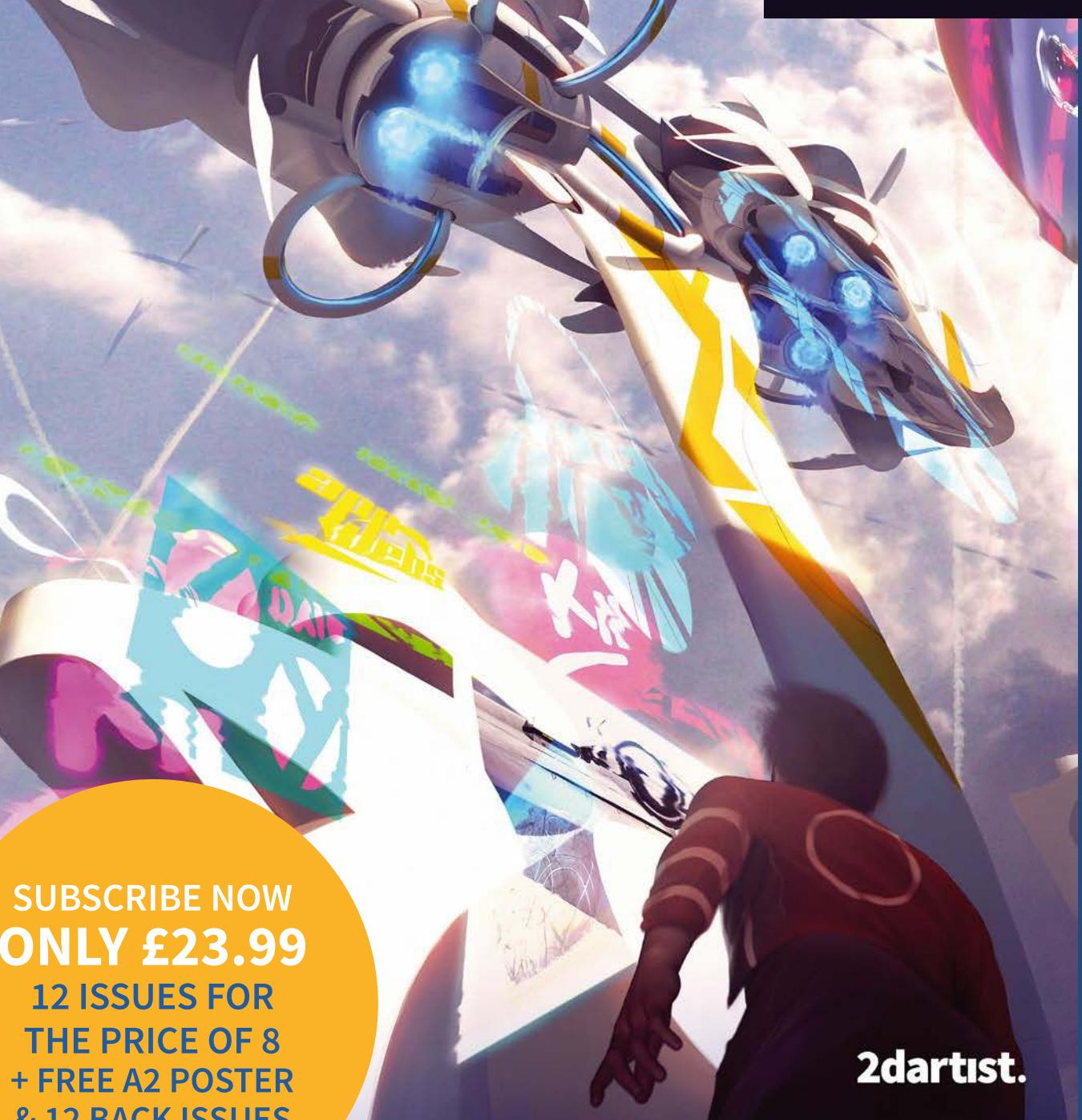
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Cantoris

by Ken Barthelmey

Learn how Ken Barthelmey, creature and character designer for films, paints his unusual fantasy creatures 

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The Artist



Ken Barthelmey

theartofken.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Ken Barthelmey is an illustrator specializing in creature and character design. He has worked on many film projects including *The Maze Runner* and *The Scorch Trials*. Ken also works on his own IP project.

The first thing I like to do before I start to paint my fantasy creatures is envisage a background story for them. I push myself to make my creations as realistic and believable as possible, so having a background story in mind helps me to reach that goal.

I consider where they live, what they eat or what evolutionary adaptation they need to survive in their living environment. In this image, which was created as a personal project, I designed a hybrid creature that was somewhere between a reptile and a monkey. It is called Cantoris and it feeds on insects. These creatures make beautiful sounds and are known as The Singers of the Forest.

I know a lot about anatomy and subsurface scattering but it is always a huge challenge to paint colorful skin that looks authentic. My technique is very similar to classic oil paintings.

Sketching & finding a key pose

Because I wanted to bend the visual characteristics of a chameleon and monkey, I used several reference images from these animals that helped me to get started.

To design an interesting creature it is also very useful to make a lot of pencil sketches first to come up with ideas. Later on, I usually doodle several thumbnails to find a good composition and an interesting pose for the final illustration.

These drawings don't need to be detailed. It's a great trick to scribble very fast and just put down on paper all the spontaneous ideas that come up.

Usually, I use a pencil or a Copic Marker for these messy drawings. When I was satisfied with the design I started to work on a more detailed pencil sketch, which I then scanned into my computer for work in Photoshop.

The final sketch can be more detailed. The head was the focus of this painting, so I put most of my attention into this area. This sketch served as a guideline and a base, making it easier for me to color the picture afterwards.

“I carefully mixed a color palette with the main colors I wanted to use in my painting”

- Here are some of my scribbles to come up with ideas. As you can see, some of these sketches are very rough and don't have many details



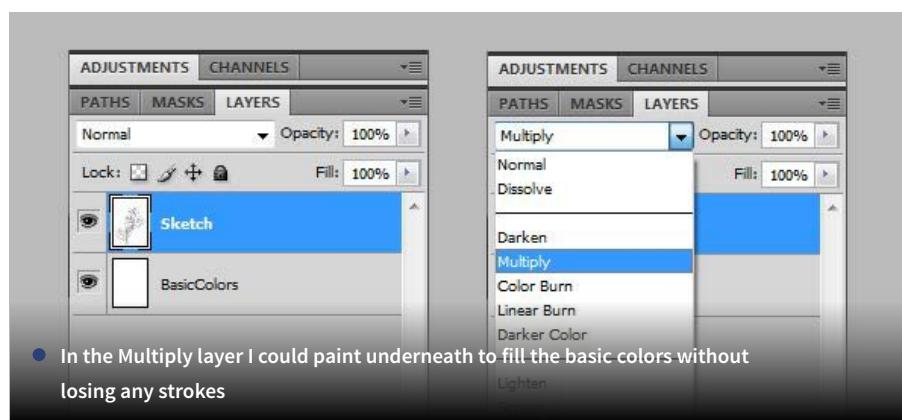
- The initial sketch, colored in Photoshop. Shadows or other details were useless because it was just the base



Find the base colors

It was then time for one of the most important steps: adding color. The technique I use for this is very similar to those used with traditional oils or acrylic paint, in that I apply color through the shades from dark to light. At this stage, it was very important that I chose the right colors at this stage because the painting would be built upon this palette.

I changed the layer of the sketch to Multiply blending mode in Photoshop. By doing ▶



- I prefer to have a full view of the painting so I can see that the colors will match



this, I could paint beneath the sketch. I then placed another layer under the Multiply layer (the sketch) to fill out the basic colors.

I carefully mixed a color palette with the main colors I wanted to use in my painting. I used a separate layer for this.

Afterwards, I picked the colors with the Eyedropper Tool. I didn't zoom in on the picture while painting these basic colors, so that I had a full view of it. These are only the base colors, so I didn't focus on the details yet and tried to work with only a few brushstrokes. The character slowly comes to life. I love the look of real oil paintings, so I used different custom brushes with a texture to achieve a similar look. Using different brushes gives the painting a more artistic look so that it doesn't look too digital.

"Adding details and textures gives the picture a realistic look. However it's important that the details always fit the picture"

It's always good to work with many layers because if you make a mistake, you can correct it very fast and easily. If the document is too big, I simply convert the layers into one.

Painting details & lighting setup

After finishing the basic colors I started with the detailed work. I began to overpaint the sketch, creating a new layer and placing it above. I love



- Here are some of my scribbles to come up with ideas. As you can see, some of these sketches are very rough and don't have many details



painting texture details; this part is the most fun and, accordingly, takes the most amount of time.

Adding details and textures gives the picture a realistic look. However it's important that the details always fit the picture because too many details can destroy the realism. If you draw a lot, with time you will develop a feeling for balance. By painting a suggestive depth of field, I was able to accentuate the creature.

When you work on a painting, try to imagine from which direction the light comes from. In this case the light source comes from the left side, so I painted the left corner a little bit brighter. I always start with the highlights so I can better imagine the light setting. I will often paint small directional arrows on a separate layer. This is a great trick to remind yourself where the light comes from and where the shadow has to be.

Again, the head was the focus of the painting, so I put most of my attention in this area. The pencil strokes from the sketch disappear under the colors. Because of the brightness of the ground, I painted some green reflected light on the character's body.

Color correction & final touches

You surely know the feeling when you aren't satisfied with the colors of your painting afterwards. That feeling that something

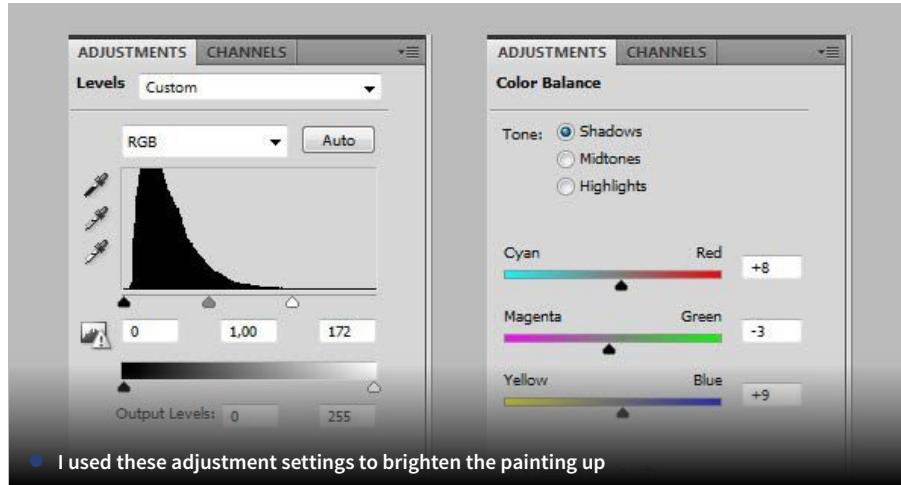
is missing: sometimes the colors are too dark or just not as gorgeous as you would like. As we work digitally, we can solve these problems very quickly and easily.

I used separate adjustment layers including Levels and Color Balance, to slightly brighten the painting up. For the final touches and to increase the impression of a classically-inspired painting, I added a noise effect. To make this, I created a new layer and filled it with a gray color.

Then I clicked on Filter > Noise > Add Noise. I set the amount to 21.27% and clicked OK. After that I clicked on Filter > Blur > Box Blur and set the radius to 2 pixels. Once I had that, I changed the layer to Soft Light and set the Opacity to 54%.

Experimenting with color

Designing and painting creatures is always huge fun for me. I usually add more brownish tones to my paintings, so making this image was a very fresh and enjoyable process. I enjoyed working on the colorful skin, as the strong rim light offered the possibility to tap the full potential of the colors. I'm also very happy with the pose as I feel that it looks dynamic and very mysterious. Every painting you create is unique in its own way. However, sometimes you may find that you just don't like the end result of your work. But I must advise that if you work hard and paint every day, you will constantly learn new stuff to improve your skills and techniques. Simply stay passionate and motivated to always push yourself to the limits! ●





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